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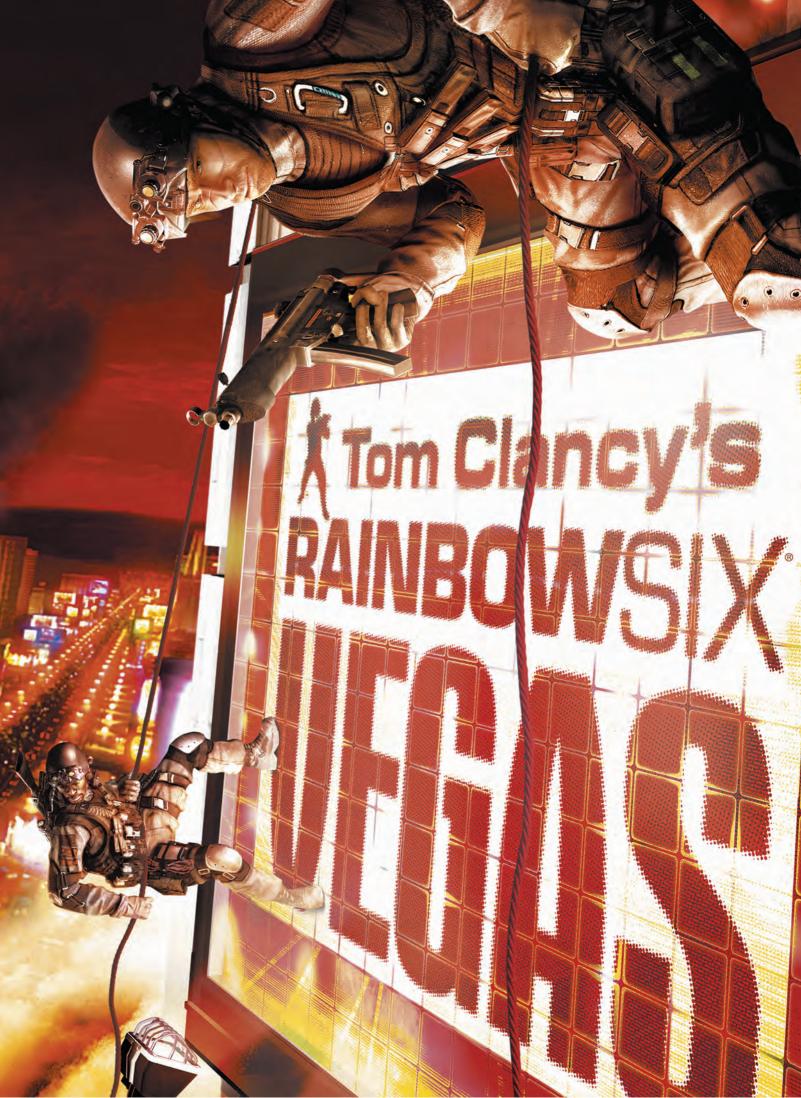




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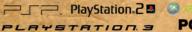


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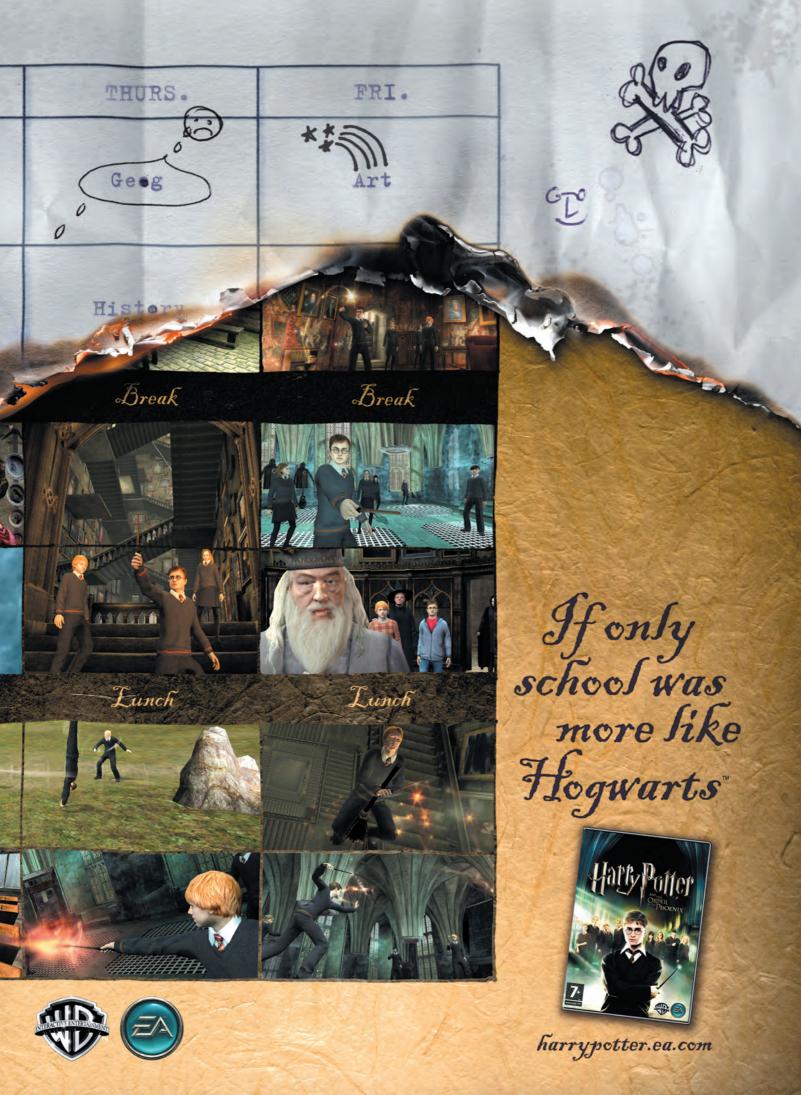
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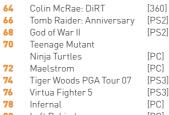
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ED'S NOTE

EAH, OKAY, THE SIZE again. Look, I might just stop trying to predict how many pages this magazine will have. A hundred and forty-eight pages are ideal and 172 are awesome, but today it's 124. Then again, there was a time when 124 meant it was a massive edition of NAG. Some of our more astute readers will notice that there aren't really fewer ads compared to the May issue. We underestimated the ad count and by the time we had an accurate count, the mag was nearly done. I don't like it either. We left some awesome stuff on the cutting floor for this issue. One of them was a much larger Overlord feature, a game I would like to personally punt for a second. The Q&A in this issue answers some interesting questions, but it might not bring across how stunning this game is. I think it's great. Anything that works like Pikmin and feels like Dungeon Keeper - and appears to be very polished - would seem great.

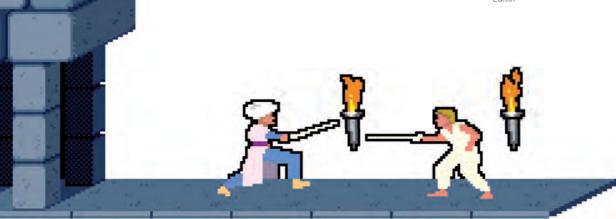
Okay, enough pimping. In other news, my 360 died, so I still haven't looked at the Crackdown content (but I would have by the time you read this). In the same month in which Epic accused Microsoft of enforcing micro-payments, Crackdown got a load of free stuff (and some pay-for content). That's encouraging, but I'm still a bit annoyed that Oblivion doesn't have nearly the amount of mods on the 360 as on the PC. Worse, you have to pay for any Oblivion content on LIVE. Still, the Crackdown and recently released Bullet Witch free content is a trend gamers would really like to see more of Back to the 360 – I tried the towel trick. It worked great, right up to putting GRAW2back in again. I'm sure the game pushes Release Candidate 1 models of the 360 too hard, causing something to go. Now it's just dead. No Heavy Weapon, no GRAW 2, no Luxor and no Crackdown. Fortunately, there is a PC with Frets on Fire installed and a Guitar Hero II controller connected to it. Once again, user-created content features heavily. Guitar Hero is awesome, but nothing beats some of the user-made tracks on Frets. Sing with me: He. Is. The. Painkiller!!

Another seemingly unrelated story: an acquaintance recently acquired a 360 and discovered, much to his dismay, that it needed an update before playing the game he received with it. When I told him that all the new consoles are like that, he was very unimpressed. The damn thing should just play the game, he argued, like the PS2 did. True, and the updates usually only bring benefits for LIVE users. They rarely enhance your offline experience. Sony and Microsoft should think about this. They should also remember that if you want to go online, you're going to have to open up. In the next few years, the pressure for user-created mods and maps, not to mention a means to trade and find them, will become a crucial part of a console's online strategy. Online play is not enough. Not everyone plays online or ventures past two-player games in FIFA. However, they would dig extra content, and user-generated stuff could lure them onto your cash-cow online service. No, selling has-been games doesn't count.

Ah, one more pimp. One of the front ads is running a Rainbow Six: Vegas competition where you can send an SMS and win a night at Sun City. Maybe they'll give you gear and let you do a few window breaches while abseiling down the Cascades.

Finally, a special thanks to the NAG forum community who not only answers the monthly NAG question with glee, but also completely kneecapped a recent 'invasion' of the NAG forums. NAG's party committee thanks you for your loyalty. Extra bread in the food line tonight!

> James Francis Editor



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DISPATCH OF NOTE

AGENT: Christopher Human **REPORT:** PC vs. Console

AGING THROUGH MY COLLECTION, I have seen many of your columnists come and go such as Ramjet (and his bizarre letter page sidekick Ramjet Jrl, and good old Michael James. I enjoy newcomer Megan Hughes quite a lot. I have always been a fan of Miktar and generally find them quite interesting. In fact, the only real downfall in the opinion columns (especially lately) is Anton Lines' 'Domain of The_Basilisk'. I'm glad you moved, Anton; I thought it would mean the end of your column, yet still you persist. More often than not, you use your column to spout garbage. You use big words to do it and on the surface everything looks pretty and clever and oh so impressive, but when you actually read what you are saying, it's more often than not a load of junk.

You will read this I hope and no doubt ask for some evidence to back up my claims. This I will provide with your last column in mind, the one entitled 'Fragdoll physics'. I will skip to the third paragraph, as the first two are a simple introduction. You start with a line saying, "It's obviously difficult to compare games with different skill requirements." You then state Quake's requirements such as timing, strafing etc. against Counter-Strike's squad-based play. You then say that it's a toss-up as to which needs greater skill. You then say the only objective comparison is between levels of randomness. Why is this so? And assuming it is so and you measure two games based purely on randomness, what does it show? After comparing Quake and Counter-Strike on everything but randomness and deciding it's a tie, you make that statement? Surely, Quake then needs more skill as it's less random?

skill-intensive," yet in this case, you will only do it on a console game as most PC gamers are biased or uncertain on this relatively new argument. So, the backlash is less than the one that would have been created had you declared either CS or Quake having a higher skill requirement.

You then make a giant leap (in logic) in a single sentence. The sentence is quite small and hides quite snugly in the end bit of the fourth paragraph. It even reads quite easily, until you actually think about what you are saying. "This means that as long as the console controller is used for games like RSV, aiming will always be less precise – and therefore more random – than in games that use the mouse." Please, Anton, read that sentence again and look at what you wrote. It means that every game using the Xbox 360 controller to aim needs less skill than a mouse according to your logic. So, the PC version of RSV requires a lot more skill than the console version because I have a mouse on the PC. If I buy a keyboard and mouse for my Xbox and plug them in, does that mean my skill automatically increases?

Surely, if we play 100 rounds of an FPS game on the Xbox and I win 99 and you win one, it is because I am more skilled at the game and at aiming with the controller than you are. You imply that it is just a case of me having randomly won a lot more than you have, and in the end, we are still of equal skill. This means that players of every shoot-em-up on the Xbox are equally skilled. Regardless of how vast the winning margin, or how consistently a player wins, it's impossible to be more skilled than anyone else. The consistently good players are only luckier.

You sum up the entire skill requirements for the game based on its controller without



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TOPIC FOR NEXT MONTH:

What do you think of pro gaming?

actually looking at the game itself. RSV is also a team-based game [like CS], uses voice, needs timing, etc. In fact, the only difference I can see is that it looks better and doesn't seem to have random aim-at-feet-get-headshot moments such as the kind found in CS. You compare Quake and CS based on gameplay elements, call it a tie, and then rip RSV based on its controller. Now, while I don't believe that the Fragdolls are the greatest girl gamers of all time, I do think they are a far more visible force than any of the other girl-based groups before them. They are doing a lot to make gaming cool and publicly accessible. I agree that they are perhaps the only pro-team in RSV, and that the level of competition is not as stiff as in, say, Halo 2 or Quake or CS or whatever. But to reduce their choice of game based on a controller is ridiculous, especially since you pay respect to the Halo 2 pro-players who aim on the exact same controller.

Anton, these are the flaws in just one of your articles. The same flaws, strange logic leaps, etc. are evident in most of your articles. NAG has always welcomed constructive criticism, and that is what I am trying to provide. NAG has also always listened and used it to improve the magazine. I hope you take this to heart. It's nothing personal; I don't know you and have no reason to attack you. I have never met you and have no hidden agenda. I'm simply trying to make the magazine I buy better. Please see this criticism for what it is.

Due to your dissent in attacking a senior party member in public, instead of a game, you'll receive gift-wrapped claymores.
Please pull the bow while unwrapping.

AGENT: David Yates
REPORT: Gore In Games

FTER READING KAPUOS'S LETTER [NAG, May 2007], I feel I need to say something about this age-old topic, 'Violence In Games'. I think that some game designers really need to sit down and think about whether or not their games actually benefit from high levels of gore and violence. Maybe I'm ill informed, but surely lower age-restrictions lead to larger markets. I'm sure that a lot of games could be just as good without all the blood and guts. Or perhaps, there could be a gore-level adjustment system, like an advanced 'Blood Decals'. For 18 and over, the game would have all the gore, for 13-17, it could have a little bit of blood, and for 12 and under, maybe it could have water pistols. It would take more work, but in the end, you could sell it to more people. So, that's my take on the matter. Either remove the gore, or have a gore-adjustment system.

Careful, agent, this smacks of counterintelligence. You are effectively advising the youth that using a water gun when faced with a Shambler is perfectly fine, when we all know that a Shambler shoots electricity. But there is perhaps merit in modes to accommodate junior party members. The problem is, of course, the strain this would place on the developers, plus kids will always try and get the nasty stuff unblocked if they can. Best keep the mature games to the mature gamers and make sure The Sims never get an N.R.A. expansion.

AGENT: N1ghtH4wk
REPORT: The Old NAG

WOULD LIKE TO COMPLAIN about your mag in the interest of improving it. I am a reader of your mag and over a period, I have found some things missing. Number one is the useful summary that you dropped a few years ago that told you the pros and cons of a game, as well as the short summary paragraph that went with it. Secondly, I am very disappointed about the badger competition, and although you have used a dharma symbol, it doesn't completely make up for the badger because the badger was a living (sort of cute) animal and the symbol is only a symbol. Thirdly, I would like to know what happened to the epilogue and why is it not there any more. The funny pictures, the weird topics, even

the release date for the next edition of NAG, where did they all go! Any way, I hope that your magazine is slightly improved by this message and will make the fans of the 'old NAG' happy. You guys have a great magazine, so please don't go and make it worse. I am sure that there was a valid reason for the above things disappearing, but if you take stuff away and never put any thing in, then the magazine might eventually go bankrupt. So, next time you think of removing something, first think of something to replace it with.

An interesting dilemma, agent. Field office has received your suggestion of retrieving the absent Badger. But command has reminded us that despite his patriotic deeds, the Badger is now considered a traitor. Even after forcing him underground, he continued to attack the government through his propaganda piece known as 'Epilogue'. Successful counter-intelligence operations eventually

I think that some game designers really need to sit down and think about whether or not their games actually benefit from high levels of gore and violence. Maybe I'm ill informed, but surely lower age-restrictions lead to larger markets.

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ON THE FORUM

QUESTION: PC and console gamers will soon be able to play against each other. Do you think this is a big deal? Are you looking forward to it?

mrdevil: I find the prospect interesting. The first game is going to be a shooter [ShadowRun], so I am curious to see how the developers have balanced the different ways of aiming to prevent the Xbox 360 players from being annihilated by players using a mouse.

J_Man: I think it will be really fun and everyone will want to join in. But with an FPS, it would be a lot easier for the PC players.

FrOzeBud: Never in my life did I think I would see the day that PC and console could challenge each other in the same game. I think it is brilliant and it will open new doors for both platforms and competitive play. It will force people to get to know the other side. Stop all this fuss about platforms and stuff. Gaming UNITE!!!

PloPshoP: Developers will have to approach the whole 'compatibility/ levelness of playing field' issue very carefully, otherwise an unfair advantage one platform has over the other will lead to increased feuds amongst the fanboys of a particular platform.

Gambit: I think it might be big, but in my opinion, the hardcore console first-person shooter 'experts' will soon realise that they are beaten in each and every FPS that supports both console and PC. Gamers with a mouse and keyboard will have the clear advantage, if you ask me.

Toi: There is a definitive 'stumbling block' when it comes to the controllers for both platforms. PC has a clear advantage over console when it comes to FPSs.

FrznFrSde: Consoles and computers will never share the same market because of their hardware differences. You cannot aim for the same market because of the ritual of upgrading system parts for both, and the software used for each.

GeometriX: I've come to realise that controllers have such a small impact on how a game is played. It really is up to player skill in the end.

d4v1d: Cross-platform gaming, eh? I think it would cause too many limitations to try and cross the divide.

X-Ploding_Shoes: This is a great idea. It will unite the gaming world because of one thing: the LAN now won't be a PC-only affair. We'll have large numbers of console and PC gamers on one server. One server to bind them, one server to find them, and one server to rule them all!

Have your say on the NAG forums http://forums.tidemedia.co.za

Usually there is a lot of information in your magazine that I already have read on the Net. This time around, the magazine taught me more different things than what I search for on the Net during a month.

removed his lunatic ramblings from the pages of this magazine. While we appreciate his work for NAG in the past, command has instructed field office that he still remain at large and should be considered an enemy of the state. As for the summaries, the writers stopped responding to physical and mental abuse. We cut their word count. They are now fully cooperative again.

AGENT: Philip Moolman
REPORT: The April issue
AM YERY PLEASED TO inform you that the
April issue has sparked a higher interest
in the NAG universe for me. This is the
first time I had so much fun reading
the magazine. Usually there is a lot of
information in your magazine that I already
have read on the Net. This time around, the
magazine taught me more different things
than what I search for on the Net during a
month. Please do not take this the wrong
way: I am not being sarcastic, but sincere.

The three-man PS3 impressions segment was very interesting about the facts and I will reserve my opinion until I have bought my own PS3. The hefty price tag and skimpy games have not generated enough curiosity to buy a PS3 I am enjoying my 360 and the 34 games I have pushed through their paces in the last eight months. It looks like July and September hold a very high 360 game output for those two months according to various Websites, where release dates are concerned. There might even be more than a couple of PlayStation-exclusive franchises spreading their influence on more than just one console.

Excellent work, agent! Your brilliant letter will no doubt inspire NAG's other loyal followers to take up its flag and spread its message of humanity – forcibly, if necessary. The Internet had initially represented a threat to the state's sovereignty, but NAG has decided to meet it head-on instead of cowering like a capitalist dog hoping the masses would remain ignorant. But since NAG only attracts the best type of gaming patriot, command expected no such thing from its readers.

We are, though, unhappy that you are trying to defuse the PS3/360 riots. We wish to refer you to the party handbook, which states that controversy is good, because we sell more issues. Keep that in mind next time you consider taking on a position of pacifism.

AGENT: Stefaan Swarts **REPORT:** Should we be keen on reviving old games?

I'M SURE WE ALL remember Billy Blaze, (and if you don't, shame on you!) the eight-year-old genius with an IQ of 314. He was and still probably is the ultimate defender of Earth. Forget about Rocket Launchers

and Machine guns, about Slipgate warriors, gibbing Shamblers, Chton and Marine forces battling vast numbers of Strogg. Forget about scary little girls with long hair covering their faces, leaving blood prints all over the place. Take the bounce down nostalgia lane...

Good old Commander Keen, the little boy who wears his brother's football helmet, bounces around on that legendary pogo stick, and stuns aliens with his gun, making them disappear. Who can forget that dismal feeling as you just miss-timed the mad mushroom's jump. Who can forget the panic, the utter anxiety as the dopefish barrels down towards you...

At that time (1990), Commander Keen was on top of its game and FPS titles like Wolfenstein were only a fantasy. id Software developed an irresistible title. Little boys wanted to be him and little girls wanted to... uh... well... Getting back to the point... Let's be realistic for a moment here. Even with the F.E.A.R. or Source engine not even bouncing around on a pogo-stick, flicking switches and shooting enemies with only one type of handgun will not entertain most of today's crowd for long.

Ten to sixteen years ago, the world of computer gaming was still an infant compared to the powerhouse body builder it is today. Game developers had very limited resources and much less technology to put their ideas into computer games. Thus, games were simple and mostly 2D scrolling titles, like Duke Nukem and SAM (Secret Agent Man), for example. We remember them for the joy they brought us on our 33MHz PCs with the PC speaker bleeping away. Why would we want to desecrate these warm remembrances and go dig up old titles to revive them.

What's done is done. There's no need to revive something if it has served its purpose. You would not go trying to put new energy into an old alkaline battery, would you? And even if you did try, you would have spent more time, money and effort on something that would still not work and that you could have bought brand-new at the Seven Eleven across the street.

The party would like to remind this agent that he should not fall for the flashy bling of the capitalist machine. There is absolutely nothing wrong with 8-bit graphics and midi soundtracks. These are more than sufficient to satisfy any true gamer's needs. The failing of the West was that it provided its artisans with all of the tools, causing them to become lazy and unproductive. Party members have been dispatched to this agent to take him to rehabilitation and reorientation. (On a side note, if Commander Keen never appears on LIVE Arcade or Steam, we'll hold your letter personally responsible.)

Experience Multi-Functional

Capabilities and Blindingly Fast Speeds

Enjoy Fast Transfer Speeds and Multiple Functions All Rolled into One

The ASUS WL-500W Super Speed N multifunctional wireless router adopts the latest 802.11n draft to deliver high-speed data transfer and unparalleled interoperability between n-draft devices. Built-in Download Master and USB Plug-n'-Share features provide convenient digital content downloads and sharing of printer, webcam and external hard drive functions.

The ASUS WL-500W wireless router also comes with Intel ®"Connect with Centrino®" certification. With this certification, users can enjoy faster wireless speeds when used together with ASUS's Next-Gen Notebooks like the VX2 or S6.

802.11n Upgrade Guarantee

With draft 802.11n support, the WL-500W router enables data transfers at more than 100 Mbps - making it ideal for wireless multimedia streams, file sharing and online games throughout your entire home. The WL-500W is also fully compatible with 802.11b and g standards, allowing users to experience the latest wireless innovations without making existing home network investments obsolete.





The ASUS 802.11n guarantee covers the WL-500W Super Speed N wireless router and will guarantee compatibility with the future 802.11n standard. With so many draft n products in the market and none willing to guarantee compatibility with the new standard, ASUS is the first company to announce an 802.11n upgrade program (firmware or hardware updates) for its draft n solutions

A Host of USB Plug-n'-Share Functions

By attaching a hard drive to the WL-500W, users can utilize the network neighborhoods in Windows and use the WL-500W as a FTP server. Once this is done, users can back up data and share files wirelessly with other Wi-Fi capable devices. Users can even attach printers, webcams or other accessories into the USB 2.0 ports and share their functions too!



Download Efficiently with Download Master

Additionally, the WL-500W has several innovations to help simplify the downloading process. Users can turn the WL-500W into a wireless storage device by attaching an external hard dive via the USB 2.0 Download Master program. This program takes no computing resource and runs independently to the computer system - allowing users to continue downloading around the clock.



HOT PC SALES SIGNALING TURNAROUND FOR PLATFORM?

THE PC GAME MARKET seemed to be in serious trouble not too long ago, a far plunge from being the darling and leader of the gaming industry. However, recent sales figures seem to indicate that the market is busy growing again, for now at least. Stats released by NPD show that in the first two months of this year, American consumers bought 48% more PC games than in the same period in 2006, bringing in a tidy sum of \$203 million. Some see this as a swing in fortunes for the PC gaming industry, which dropped 14% since its \$1 billion high in 2004. The figures, which don't account for online purchases and subscription services, note that RPGs were especially popular. The lion's share of these sales went to World of WarCraft's expansion The Burning Coast, which have led some to argue that the surge is mostly a blip caused by the extremely popular MMO. But the stats don't include games like Supreme Commander and Command & Conquer 3, both released after the sales period. Only time will tell if this is a permanent event and the market is truly in an

Nevertheless, hardware vendors are certainly hedging their bets on a vibrant PC gaming market. Computer giants HP

and Dell are in fierce competition with their own high-end PC lines and machines from VoodooPC and Alienware, which the companies respectively own. The recent announcement of Capcom and NVIDIA to bring the 360 hit, Lost Planet, to the PC is another sign of a healthy market. Even an old familiar, Packard Bell, has intentions to bring high-end machines to the market. People, such as John Romero, have pointed to multi-core chips giving PCs the edge, a strategy that both Intel and AMD are following eagerly. Then there is Microsoft's LIVE service, which has begun to support PC gamers as well. Unfortunately, developers are less enthusiastic about the merging of console and PC platforms

"The key problem with the service right now is that any feature that Microsoft implements and charges for, the developer can't implement themselves," Tim Sweeney from Epic said. "As a PC developer, we're used to having complete freedom and defining our feature set - what we can give gamers and what they can do in our game. That's a big change, quite a huge change, for PC developers to now have features that we simply can't do."





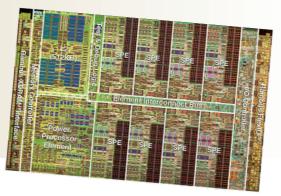
MIYAMOTO MAKES TIME 100

EVERY YEAR, TIME
PUBLISHES a list of 100 of the people the editors consider the most influential in the world. This year, its Website also held an online poll in which people could vote for one of the 202 nominees. Shigeru "Shiggy" Miyamoto, Nintendo's famed designer of games such as Super Mario, Donkey Kong and Legend of Zelda, was voted into ninth place with the fifth most number of votes. He was also one of only six people to receive over 100,000 votes.

Having been placed in the category 'Builders and Titans', Miyamoto made it into the editor-selected list printed in the magazine itself with the likes of Apple and Pixar CEO, Steve Jobs, as well as Richard Branson (Virgin CEO). However, the organisational numbering on the *Time* Website, which puts Shiggy at "92 of 100", is not his numerical ranking.

SONY TALKS COMMERCIAL CELL USE

AFTER THE RECENT SUCCESS of the PS3's Folding@Home scheme in which users allow Stanford University to use unused processing power to help in research, it was just a matter of time before other commercial companies would want to make use of this system. Currently, Sony is in talks with these companies on ways that could open the door for the Folding@Home scheme to them, but it will require some kind of incentive for the normal PS3 user. Who knows, maybe by signing up for this, they might get free games to download or extra content for others. What is also not known yet is how far the Cell processor can be pushed before it reaches its limits.







COGS GRIND TO A HALT AS MICROSOFT THROWS A SPANNER IN THE WORKS

IN WHAT IS TURNING out to be a hotly (if not unexpectedly) controversial move, Microsoft has apparently prohibited Epic Games from releasing free downloadable content for Gears of Warvia the Xbox LIVE Marketplace.

"With Gears of War we've gone through our own effort and expense to build additional maps, which are free to download, "said Epic founder, Tim Sweeney. "We've already released two and we have four more maps that we've built. We've been wanting to give them away for a long time, but actually, Microsoft has been pushing back on us for that. They're trying to build this business model around selling additional content for games and it's a valid idea, but definitely we would like to release more stuff for free, and we haven't been able to do so yet.

While Xbox LIVE product manager, Aron Greenburg, has denied that Microsoft

dictates Marketplace pricing, claiming, "it's ultimately up to the publisher," he conceded that Microsoft would occasionally adjust a download price in "some situation or unusual case where there's content that's significant in nature and would make other content look out of line." Indeed, publishers offering free goodies must certainly make those charging for content look rather unattractive in comparison. And according to industry insiders, this isn't the first time Microsoft has wrangled its subsidiaries over charges, prompting speculation that there's a significant quantity of content currently being withheld from the Marketplace.

"It's unfortunate," added Sweeney, "as there are a lot of good business reasons for releasing free content for games. You want to increase the player base, you want to keep the game



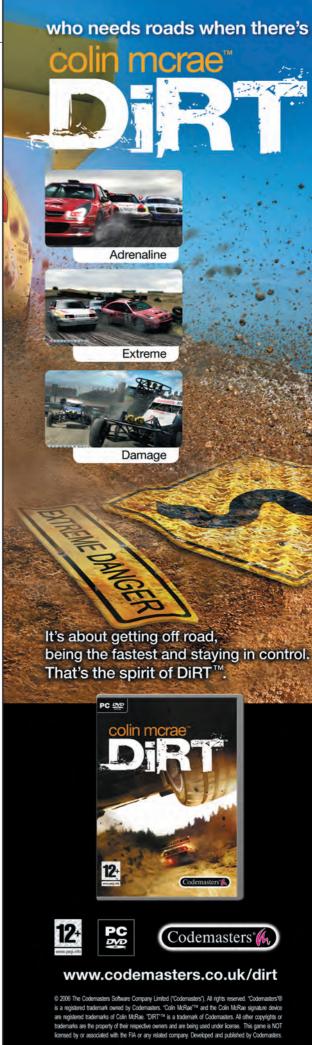
KEN KUTARAGI TO RETIRE

THE MAN BEHIND THE PlayStation, Ken Kutaragi, is set to retire in June. This comes as no surprise considering recent reports that Sony has lost over \$1.7 billion in the past fiscal year, which ended in March. What is not known is whether this is out of a personal need for retirement or because Sony needed a scapegoat. Another reason is the reportedly cold relationship between Kutaragi and Howard Stringer, Sony's CEO. Insiders have said there is no love lost between the two.

Ken Kutaragi was responsible for the success of the PSone, when console gaming first moved to CDs, and the PS2, which moved

to DVDs. He was also responsible for the PSP, Sony's stalwart handheld. However, the legacy ends rather abruptly with the PlayStation 3. Despite growing sales, the system has been the cause of clashes between Kutaragi and his peers, also apparently prompting his

Ken Kutaragi will indeed be missed by PlayStation fans worldwide, but his departure, which led to the appointment of Kaz Hirai, the American games division leader of Sony, could signal a new vision for the brand. Nevertheless, the father of the PlayStation will always be Ken Kutaragi



SNIPPETS

YOUR ESSENTIAL INFO, NOW IN BITE-SIZED PORTIONS!

Can you play **DX10** games on Windows XP? This is apparently possible, according to a group of student reverse-engineer coders. Apparently, DirectX 10 can work on XP, after some work, and the team demoed this by showing limited DX10 effects running on an XP SP2 machine. The team says it hopes to have a very functional version soon. That is, of course, if Microsoft doesn't shut them down.

Indie gamers can take their games to a new service to help them.

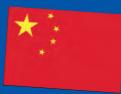
VSBLabs.com provides game testing, as well as game interface and level design, not to mention

Web services for indie titles.



EA, Nintendo, Konami and Maxis dominated the UK market last year in terms of over-the-shelf sales. Most of the top ten belongs to major companies, except for Traveller's Tales' **LEGO Star Wars** at number five, and wrestling developer. Yuke's, at number eight.

The US has taken **China** to the World Trade Organisation, complaining that the country doesn't enforce copyright law, thus not fighting piracy. However, the real issue is that US companies don't want to trade via Chinese middlemen companies, which often delay releases for between six and nine months.



Forget the fancy numbers from console launches. The true way to become filthy rich is having all of 'em people want to catch. Yes, Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl collectively sold over a million copies in the US in their first week features.

An ongoing **Halo** comic will soon be launched by Marvel. It will pick up where **Halo 2** left off, either bridging the gap between the second and third games, or covering **Halo 3**'s story. How very Star Wars... Master Chief lunch



MICHAEL BAY NOW TIED TO POP MOVIE

OH, ROTTEN LUCK THERE, Uwe Boll. Having secured the film rights to the *Prince of Persia* franchise way back in 2004, Jerry Bruckheimer has now recruited Michael Bay



for the director's seat. The pair has previously teamed up on boomboom blockbusters Bad Boys, Armageddon and Pearl Harbor, while Bay is just finishing up with Transformers.

The film, scheduled

for a 2009 release, is loosely based on the titular prince's fourth excursion, *The Sands of Time*, and boasts original game creator, Jordan Mechner, on scriptwriting duty.



"Rather than do a straight beat-for-beat adaptation of the new videogame," Mechner said, "we're taking some cool elements from the game and using them to craft a new story - much as Pirates [of the Caribbean] did with the theme park ride."

Does this mean we're going to see the very first game of the film of the game? The mind boggles.





JACK BLAMES GAMES FOR VT MASSACRE

TSEEMS THAT JACK Thompson has finally jumped the gun. Hours after the Virginia Tech massacre, which left 32 people dead, the anti-games advocate appeared on air, blaming games for the massacre. Thompson said that Counter-Strike was to blame for Seung-Hui Cho going on a rampage. This is not the first time the outspoken campaigner has blamed games for such massacres. In the past, he has fingered Grand Theft Auto and Doom as well. Unfortunately, the accusation appeared to be completely untrue. When the FBI searched Cho's room, they didn't find anything related to games, although they did confiscate a computer. His roommate said he never saw Cho play games.

However, Thompson is not convinced, telling MSNBC.com that someone "who has never killed anyone in his life [and] goes on a rampage [looking] like the *Terminator*, [then] he's a videogamer." TV psychologist, Dr Phil McGraw, also came close to fingering games during an interview on Larry King. When asked why innocent people just start killing like that, McGraw blamed violent media, mentioning games.

"You cannot tell me - common sense tells you that if these kids are playing videogames, where they're on a mass killing spree in a videogame, it's glamorised on the big screen, it's become part of the fibre of our society."

XBOX LIVE COMING TO SOUTH AFRICA!

THE SUBSCRIPTION-BASED ONLINE GAMING Service for Microsoft's Xbox 360. Xbox LIVE, will be rolling out in South Africa (after all), according to a recent press release submitted in response to the plea of local online petition www. sayyoursay.com. At the time of writing, close to a thousand South African Xbox 360 gamers have signed the petition, which implores Microsoft to set up local billing facilities and pricing models, as well as to make provision for existing user account migration to the potential local Xbox LIVE service.

"We would like to begin by thanking you for your support and are thrilled by the anticipation around Xbox LIVE in South Africa. The Xbox team is currently working to an international rollout plan for Xbox LIVE. We are delighted to let you know that South Africa is included in this rollout. However, we are unable to confirm exact dates for availability and functionality at this stage," Marc Batten, Country Lead for Xbox 360, told the press.

"We commit to keeping you updated as and when we have more information and reassure you that we [are] 100% committed to bringing Xbox LIVE to South Africa."



WOCKING WEBSITES 3: THE SEARCH FOR LOCAL WOCKAGE

OVE LOCAL? LOVE GAMES? Here are the Wocking Websites you'll want to know about if you answered yes to both questions. Wock on, my friend, with some local communities.

GUILDWARS.SYSTEMSHOCK.CO.ZA

Bring your Assassin, Dervish, Elementalist, Mesmer, Monk, Necromancer, Paragon, Ranger, Ritualist or Warrior and unwind a little with this local *Guild Wars* community, developed especially for those who War in Guilds.

FORUMS.PROPHECY.CO.ZA/F23/

Mount that epic mount! It's time to go form a party over at the Prophecy *World of WarCraft* forums. For the Horde! For the Alliance! For the post count!

WWW.GAMEARENA.CO.ZA/FORUMS/ VIEWFORUM.PHP?F=21

GameArena.co.za hosts one of the few Supreme Commander community forums in South Africa. Zoom in and see if you can find some action.

WWW.SYSTEMSHOCK.CO.ZA/FORUMS/INDEX.PHP?SHOWFORUM=106

If you like your *Defense of the Ancients* with a local twist, look no further than the SystemShock *DotA* forums. It's where all the *DotA* fans hang out, banging their crowbars against the chain-link fence.

FORUMS.PROPHECY.CO.ZA

For everything else, there's always the Prophecy forums: one of the longest-running, local gaming community forums, and still the number one World Heavyweight - never defeated.

WWW.CNC3.CO.ZA

Nod and GDI forces clash on this *Command & Conquer 3* fan site, where all the local commanders post about their latest victory or complain about their untimely (and unfair) defeat.

WWW.EVE-ONLINE.CO.ZA

Grab your Corporation and jump on over to the *EVE*: *Online*South African fan site to converse with other space-farers who enjoy this Massively Multiplayer Online Game [in space!].



MOVERS & SHAKERS

QUMOUR HAS IT THAT Hideo Kojima might be working on a new version of 1988 title **Snatcher**. • Doh! EA is developing a new **Simpsons** game, heading to current and next-gens, to tie in with the movie. • Disney has confirmed that 1982's arcade game **Tron** will be released on XBLA, along with its 1983 sequel **Discs of Tron**, for the movie's 25th anniversary. You'll have to buy them separately, though.

Die Hard 4.0 will only appear on mobiles. Gameloft fans, celebrate! • Masaya Matsuura from NanaOn-Sha has said that the developer is talking to Sony about a version of **Vib Ribbon** for the PlayStation Network. The weird rhythm game might even support MP3s. • Okay, brace yourself. A **Napoleon Dynamite** game has been announced. How exactly will this movie work as a game?

Clive Barker's Jericho pack shots have been released, which means it's coming... soon. • Both Lair and Heavenly Sword are apparently now due in September, for sure. Really, seriously this time. • Alas, there will be no Saints Row for the PS3, but a sequel is apparently coming to the next-gen platforms. • The latest Tom Clancy game will be called EndWar and developed by people who worked on GRAW and other TC titles. • Left 4 Dead will arrive really soon, since it's been reported to be out in Q2 2007. • PC Gamer speculates that Duke Nukem Forever will be out in June. See it anywhere?

NASCAR 08 screenshots are appearing everywhere, but no European release has been set yet. Pity, because it's looking really good. • A Happy Tree Friends game is coming to PC and XBLA. Save your furry friends... Where's the fun in that? • No! For reasons beyond our control, Mass Effect has been delayed until December! • A straight sequel of the original, **Sonic Rush Adventure** has been announced and will be on your DS later this year. • The Soul Calibur series is doing its first non-VS game spin-off. **Soul Calibur Legends** will apparently follow the adventures of Siegfried, but other characters will feature as well. Only for the Wii for now. • "New Hero. New Enemies. Swing Action." That's how Tecmo describes the new Project Rygar, announced exclusively for the Wii. • Get violent on your cellphone: God of War: Betrayal is a 2D action monster heading to mobile platforms soon.

Get ready for some Wii lightgun action in **Ghost Squad**, a game that mixes Virtua Cop and Rainbow Six in Q4 this year. • Website Seriously! posted that the next issue of GamePlay will have an interview with CroTeam and also unveil **Serious Sam 3**. Awesome! • Gamepro's latest issue revealed **Tony Hawk: Proving Ground**, the next in the series, now with skater classes and a fully-featured video editor. 360 and PS3-bound. • A Yahoo! News story revealed that Raven is working on a new **Wolfenstein** game. Super Cyborg Demi-God Nazis? Bring it on!

This sounds interesting: veterans Ubisoft Montreal have been enlisted to develop the official **Lost** game for nextgen platforms. • Egads! It appears that **Metal Gear Solid** 4 might be delayed until 2008, if online shop listings are to be believed....





THQ

THQ wants to cut back on cross-

Eidos's Jane Cavanagh has called



with titles like LittleBigPlanet



China has started to enforce laws that require minors to use ID cards displaying their age before law also limits minors to five hours

Mortal Kombat might be getting styles would remain. Don't worry, though, we're sure Fatalities, always be there



PlayStation exec, Phil Harrison, Sony had supported the idea with Net Yaroze. Unfortunately, Sony's







NAG 'FORUMITES' GATHER FOR ANOTHER MEET & GREET

■T SEEMS LIKE AN innocent enough idea, until we actually arrive at these things and realise that we're dealing with NAG fans here: not exactly the kind of people you'd want to run into in a dark alley. You'd have to ask them, "Why are all of you here in this small alley. Are you waiting for someone?" They might just answer, "Yes, you!" and then there is the running... and the screaming

Thankfully, the JHB NAG Meet & Greet (the third in a ongoing series) was a blast as usual. The lot of us (around 18 people) all crammed around several tables at the

gracious Blueberry Grill (perhaps some relation to a forum troll long forgotten) in Midrand, enjoying good food, good company and ample liquids that caused various levels of intoxication

Thank you to everyone who attended the April get-together and brought along their good nature and friendly attitudes - Kensai, Dark Master, Toi, bRaZeD, Geometrix, GenOcyde, FrznFrSde, dislekcia, Aequitas, Denim, PaRaNoiD, Fengol and everyone else whose nom de guerre has been relegated to the mists of temporarily forgotten.



CRYSIS ON PS3? NO...

PEOPLE ARE STARTING

TO ask if Crysis will be released for the PS3 any time soon, but the answer is still the same from the developers at Crytek: "No Comment." These rumours surfaced after a recent advert on Crytek's official site for a PS3 programmer. The position is more likely on the CryENGINE2 middleware solution team. At GDC this year, Crytek said that the engine would be fully compatible with the PS3 and 360, but once again said that it didn't mean console versions of Crysis would be announced. Crytek has also launched the new Kiev Studio, which is primarily focusing on creating a new IP title. Powered by the new engine, the game's name and platform is still unknown. The Kiev Studio has been recruiting for the past year and a half while undergoing extensive training and growth, which means that whatever they are up to will be huge and quite possibly on multiple platforms..

THE EVOLUTION OF: ACTION CO-OP



Ikari Warriors (1988)

Final Fight [1990] Dungeons & Dragons Shadow over Mystara (1996)



FREE GAME OF THE MONTH

THE LAST STAND

[http://www.mofunzone.com/online_games/the_last_stand.shtml] THERE'S NOTHING LIKE WAKING up in the morning, repairing your barricade, heading out to look for survivors, and then checking to see if you can find any weapons. Once the sun sets, the zombies come and you'd better be prepared.

The Last Stand is a great little Flash game that has you holding out against a zombie apocalypse for 20 days. During the night, you have to defend yourself and the barrier that protects you and survivors you have found against the zombie menace. When day breaks, you can choose how to spend your time, dividing it between repairing the barricade, searching for survivors or searching for weapons. If you find survivors, they will help you repair and even support you at night by shooting zombies with you. The weapons you can find range from sawedoff shotguns to chainsaws and high-powered rifles. Some zombies are fast, some are slow, while others may be cop zombies with Kevlar that makes them tough targets. Zombie dogs are also included, rounding off the package nicely Can you survive to the 20th day and find all the survivors and weapons?

(NAG tip: The sawed-off shotgun is your most effective killer, capable of taking out several zombies at once. We recommend searching for survivors and guns equally until you have the shotgun, and then focusing on finding all the survivors first and then the rest of the weapons Don't forget to repair your barrier!)





STARCRAFT 2 FINALLY COMING?

Numours HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING the Internet suggesting that StarCraft 2 is on the way, with a Beta version supposedly being released by the end of 2007. The source of these rumours is a supposed translation of a Korean Website by TeamLiquid. According to the translation, Blizzard is planning on announcing the sequel at its World Wide Invitational [WWI]. Held in South

Korea, the WWI is an event to which top gamers are invited to play Blizzards games. The game will, apparently, continue the storyline of the original, with the addition of a new race.

Blizzard has yet to confirm any of the rumours, but have said that they have a huge announcement planned around the 19^{th} of May (date for the WWI).



SONY'S GOATGATE FAUX PAS

NPREPARATION FOR THE European launch of God of War II, Sony decided to throw an extravagant party in Athens for journalists from a select group of high-profile gaming publications. In accordance with the theme, the organisers brought in a bevy of topless ladies, a somewhat flabby chap posing as Kratos, some sort of PortaPit of live snakes, and one partially decapitated goat.

Lurid reports of this shindig promptly turned up in UK tabloid, *The Daily Mail*, sparking vehement public outrage. According to the newspaper, "Guests at the event were invited to reach inside the goat's still-warm carcass to eat offal from its stomach." While this isn't strictly true – the contents of this unfortunate ruminant's guts consisted of nothing more insidious than some extra chunky traditional soup – one has to wonder what on earth Sony was thinking.

A spokesperson for Sony later announced that the company is "conducting an internal inquiry into aspects of the event in order to learn from the occurrence and put into place measures to ensure that this does not happen again." We can only hope that next time the PR people sit down to a strokey-beard meeting, they leave the ouzo at the door.

DAVID JAFFE DISSES BLU-RAY... MAYBE

NA RECENT VIDEO interview with Game Trailers, God of War creator, David Jaffe, was asked what he'd change about Sony's PS3 console. The Website subsequently ran a snippet in which Jaffe responds, "I probably would have taken the Blu-ray out and sold it for less money." This prompted an immediate blogger frenzy, touting inflammatory headlines that shrieked, "Jaffe: I Would Not Have Included Blu-ray In PS3".

The following day, Sony issued a somewhat oblique statement, saying that Jaffe "has earned the right to speak his mind on anything he wants when it comes to videogames."

An apparently "trusted source", however, later revealed to *GamePro* that this comment was taken out of context, claiming Jaffe had prefaced this remark by affirming that the PS3 is fine as it is, and gone on to add that Sony is smarter than him when it comes to that sort of thing anyway.



BUDGETTOP 20



I. Age of Mythology



POL 18



7. Dungeon Siege Legends of Aranna



10. Rainbow Six: Lockdown



13. King Kong



16. Far Cry



more @ www.megarom.co.za

19. Silent Hunter II



2. Rise of Nations Gold Edition



Prince of Persia



8. Splinter Cell



11. Zoo Tyco



14. Rayman



17, Microsoft Train



20. Playboy The Mansion



EXCLUSIVE

CSI:
GDER EINE HIGHORIE
DARK HOTVEE

3. CSI: Dark Motives



Pirates of the Caribbear



Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter



12. Combat Flight Simulator 2



15. Scrabble 2005 Edition



18. Pacific Fighters







US gaming mag, EGM, reported that BioWare had assembled a new team, designated to work on a Knights of the Old Republic MMO.

The developer had also licensed MMO middleware a few months ago. However, what would this mean for the current MMO, Star Wars Galaxies?

Microsoft has started banning 360s with modified firmware from LIVE. As with the original Xbox, the machine's unique ID is targeted. Nintendo, meanwhile, has advertised in Europe that mod-chips void your warranty, and that they are illegal in select countries. However, they are legal in Australia, thanks to the high prices charged for games there.



Microsoft's latest update for the 360 includes support for chatting via your Messenger account. Unfortunately, no other chat clients are supported yet, and chances aren't good that more will be added. But we can hope, can't we? The update also apparently adds XwD support.

The Leipzig Games Convention,

Europe's answer to the former E3, will be even bigger this year. Thanks to last year's record attendance, the show is increasing its floor space by 28% to 115,000m². There will also be 22 extra exhibitors, totalling 390.

Hooray for games! US governmen body, the **Federal Trade**

Commission, has issued a report on the state of voluntary rating systems in the entertainment industry. It appears that games are far ahead of its counterparts in restricting and controlling the sales of mature titles to minors.

SEGA pimped its new deal with Marvet by saying that movie-license games are going to improve. Apparently, studios take games a lot more seriously, but those six-month rush jobs do still happen. In fact, a certain Marvel superhero's recent movie game isn't getting nice reviews at all.



ROCKSTAR: 360 LIMITING GTA IV

AFTER ALMOST A YEAR since Rockstar Announced that Grand Theft Auto IV would be released on both the Xbox 360 and the PS3, problems are now surfacing regarding space. As Rockstar's executive VP, Dan Houser, states, the problem remains that with no guarantee of a hard drive in every Xbox, as well as the use of normal DVDs, the Xbox 360 is limiting GTA IV quite severely. Rockstar hasn't yet mentioned any problems with the PS3 version, but people are also suspecting

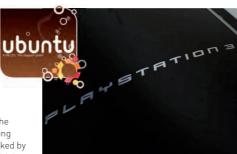
that sales on the PS3 will be limited due to the fact that on the Xbox 360 version, players may download exclusive episodic content from LIVE, which could turn more sales to the 360 version. It comes as a double-edged sword for Rockstar, but only time will tell exactly how limiting the 360 will be for the popular franchise. Whatever the case may be, Rockstar has promised an extremely realistic game with added intelligence for the police systems.

LINUX DEVELOPERS WANT PS3 EXPOSED

THE UBUNTU LINUX FOUNDATION,

Linux for Human Beings, recently released their latest operating system for the PlayStation 3. Version 7.04, also known as Feisty Fawn, can be installed as a second operating system, which will run as an alternate to the PS3's operating system, XMB.

The system, however, cannot access the RSX, the NVIDIA GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) without Sony's approval, as it's blocked by the Hypervisor chip (which allows for multiple operating systems to run on a single unit). The reason for this is, apparently, to prevent anyone producing their own PS3 games, but it



creates a performance problem with the Linux products. An online petition has been drawn up to encourage Sony's approval.

ARENA 77 SET FOR EMPEROR'S PALACE ESWC

RENA 77, THE LOCAL

Arganiser of Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC) events, has announced all the details you need for its upcoming Emperor's Palace event. Due to a change in sponsorship, a new location had to be found and, as you might have guessed, it's Emperor's Palace. It will take place from the 8th of June through the weekend to the 10^{th} , and, as usual, will feature a large Open LAN as well as the competitions. This year's comp games will be Counter-Strike 1.6, Trackmania, Quake 4, C&C 3, Battlefield 2142 and Warcraft III. Entry to these or the Open LAN starts at

However, this year Arena 77 is sweetening the entry fee. Apart from entry giving you full access to the entire event, entrants at Emperor's Palace will also receive a year's membership to A77, the Arena77 club that will track your performance and rank to qualify for other ESWC events. In the near future, membership will also qualify members for discounts at certain retailers (and it comes with a nice membership card).

However, we all know what the real question is: Will there be a party again? Definitely, Arena 77's Len Nery assured us, pointing out that it will be held at the swanky Monsoon Lagoon. For more information on the Emperor's Place ESCW event and A77, visit www.arena77.co.za.

FREE MOD OF THE MONTH

EVE OF DESTRUCTION 2 [BATTLEFIELD 2]

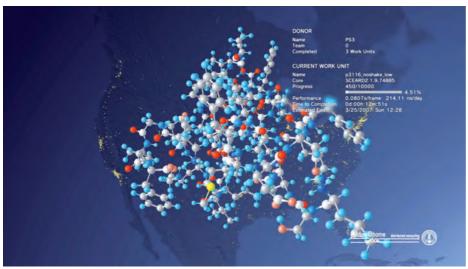
[On the DVD!]

OOTHER MILITARY CONFLICT is comparable to those dramatic years of the 20th century. Most rumours spread about the Indochina and Vietnam War are not honest, even though it was the best-documented war

in history. No other military conflict was ever so controversial, pointing to an unloved fact: our enemy was not the only source of evil; the evil could be found within ourselves. The Eve Of Destruction mod is a tribute to the US, ARVN and Vietcong/NVA soldiers who fought and died in Vietnam, and also to the Vietnamese people."

Weighing in at over 1.26B of beefy MOD goodness, Eve of Destruction 2 features a variety of weapons, over 40 brand-new vehicles and lush, diverse maps ranging from dense jungles to overgrown rice paddies. Version 1.1 contains several fixes, tweaks, added single-player, and cooperative support to several of the included maps.





CONSOLE WATCH

TWENTY GIGABYTE PLAYSTATION 3S are getting harder to find, but Sony denies that it has discontinued the low-end version. SCEA PR boss, Dave Karraker, has told news sources that Sony is to discontinue the 20GB PS3 and many US stores no longer stock the 20GB PS3 including GameStop, EB Games and Best Buy. Sony's own online store, SonyStyle, also no longer sells it. Sony has, however, confirmed that it would remain available in Japan despite what SCEA says.

Nintendo donated over a hundred Wii consoles to YMCA locations around the US in April as a part of the YMCA's Healthy Kids Day (Wii Sports was played during the activities). It's still hard to find a Wii to buy internationally, and Nintendo has commented that the Wii shortages could continue to last for months. Nintendo reported that it had sold 5.84 million Wii units since its debut five months ago (up until 31 March) and that the Nintendo DS had also done well with 23 million units sold during the fiscal year, with the total sold at 40 million since its November 2004 launch. In April, the Wii outsold the PS3 seven-to-one in Japan.

Many a PS3 has been folding proteins as part of Sony's partnership with Stanford University and their Folding@ Home project, which uses distributed computing to research diseases. Now Sony appears to be in discussion with a number of companies to get them to use the same processing power for commercial applications. As an example: a start-up or pharmaceutical company that lacks a super-computer could use the networked PS3 infrastructure to solve a big problem. However, unlike Folding@Home, these companies would be using the network for profit, and PS3 owners wouldn't want to be exploited. Sony is looking at how to offer incentives for those of its 1.3 million user strong network (Xbox LIVE currently has six million members) who participate.

Phil Harrison doesn't like it when Home, the upcoming virtual community for the PS3, is compared to the online virtual world Second Life by Lindin Labs. He mentions that while they may look the same, they fulfil very different roles. He also hinted at strong PS3 homebrew plans, but also that Sony is committed to fighting piracy and illegal hacking. EA's executive VP of international publishing, Gerhard Florin, has said that one should wait a few years before passing judgement on the performance of Sony's latest home console. "You'll only be able to tell in two years' time," said Florin when asked about the PS3's prospects

Hirokazu Hamamura, president of Enterbrain (the publisher of popular Japanese magazine Famitsu), claims that while the Xbox 360 isn't doing well in Japan compared to its success in North America, all that could change if Final Fantasy XIII and Metal Gear Solid 4 go multiplatform. He reasons that if that happens, the 360 will become a huge success in Japan, as it will have the same anticipated PS3 titles, but at a much cheaper investment. Microsoft admits that the Xbox 360 business will become profitable in 2008, and poor J. Allard had to wear dreadlocks to pay off a bet he lost with Newsweek's game writer N'Gai Croal (the PSP did better than Allard had predicted)









AND YOU THOUGHT PLATINUM WAS EXPENSIVE...



Crash Bandicoot The Wrath of Cortex



Spyro A Hero's Tail



The Simpsons Hit & Run



50 Cent Bulletproof



Crash Nitro Kart



Crash TwinSanity



Spyro Enter The Dragonfly



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Tag Team Racing

FIND \longrightarrow WIN \bigcirc











GAMING CHARTS



PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Resistance: Fall of Man
- Motorstorm
- Virtua Fighter 5
- Splinter Cell: Double Agent
- 5 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007



XBOX 360

- 1 Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
- 2 Crackdown
- Gears of War
- 4 Brian Lara Cricket 2007
- Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2



PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 God of War II
- 2 Spider-Man 3
- 3 Ghost Rider
- 4 Final Fantasy XII
- Brian Lara Cricket 2007



PC

- 1 Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
- 2 S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl
- Supreme Commander
- The Elder Scrolls IV: Shivering Isles
- Brian Lara Cricket 2007



PSP

- 1 Final Fantasy VII
- Ghost Rider
- Medal of Honor Heroes
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
- Burnout Dominator

CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Every month we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better [funny] caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. $Send your \ captions \ to \ ed @nag.co.za \ with \ the \ subject \ [June \ Caption].$



JUNE CONTEST NAG'S LAME

ATTEMPT:

"Steve could have iust written his name in the snow with wee like all his friends, but then Steve thought all his friends were wussies. He killed them all instead."

MAY WINNER

"My precious, me thinks stupid humans have puts us in wrong game!" Rudolph von Abo



automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

WE DEED A HERO

Every month, in honour of our new favourite TV show, Heroes, we'll hide the mysterious mark of the heroes somewhere in the magazine. It could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find it and send an e-mail to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line [Heroes June]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a fabulous prize from our new sponsor, Trust! See details at the top of the page. And remember: Save the cheerleader, save the world!

RULES: (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be









JUN	E RELEASE LIST Subject to a	hange
DAY	GAME PLATF	ORM
1	Tomb Raider: Anniversary Edition	PC
1	Naruto Uzumaki Chronicles	PS2
1	Tomb Raider: Anniversary Edition	PS2
1	25 to Life	PS2
1	The Sims 2: H&M Fashion Stuff	PC
1	Tony Hawk Downhill Jam	PS2
7	Pro Evolution Soccer 6 Platinum	PS2
7	Winx Club: Join the Club	PSP
7	Pro Evolution Soccer 6 Platinum	PSP
7	Overlord	360
7	Colin McRae DiRT	360
	Now only R499.95. Save R100!	
8	Watech Senko No Ronde	360
8	Forza 2	360
_	Only R419.95. Save R80!	2/0
8	Forza 2 Collector's Edition	360 PS2
14	SpongeBob: Battle for Volcano Island	PSP
14	Heatseeker Smash Court Tennis 3	PSP
15	The Sims 2: Pet Stories	PC
15	Hellgate London	PC
21	Buzz: The Mega Quizz (With Buzzers)	PS2
21	Buzz: The Mega Quizz (With Buzzers)	PS2
21	Buzz: Junior Robo Jam (With Buzzers)	PS2
21	Buzz: Junior Robo Jam (Stand Alone)	PS2
21	SOCOM US Navy Seals:	PS2
21	Combined Assault	F 32
21	WWE Smackdown! vs RAW 2007	PS2
	Platinum	
21	WWE Smackdown! vs RAW 2007	PSP
	Platinum	
21	Monster Madness: Battle for Suburbia	PC
22		Multi
26	Harry Potter & the Order of the Phoenix Pre-order and stand a chance to win	Multi a
	Harry Potter Hamper!	_
29	Hitman Blood Money Special Edition	PC
29	Hitman Triple Pack	PS2
29	Guitar Hits 2006	PSP
29	Tenchu Z	360
29	Project Sylpheed	360
29	Vampire Rain	360
	Pre-order for R419.95. Save R80!	D.C.O.
TBA	Torrente	PS2
TBA	Super Fruitfall	PS2 PS2
TBA	Superbike World Championship Armored Core: Last Raven	PS2
TBA	Silverfall	PSP
TBA	Marvel Trading Card Game	PSP
TBA	Super Fruitfall	PSP
TBA	Superbike World Championship	PSP
TBA	Practical IQ	PSP
TBA	Super Pocket Tennis	PSP
TBA	Exit 2	PSP
TBA	Capcom Puzzle Word	PSP
TBA	Formula One 2006 Platinum	PSP
TBA	Tekken Dark Resurrection Platinum	PSP
TBA	Evil Days of Luckless John	PC
TBA	Torrente	PC
TBA	Marvel Trading Card Game	PC
TBA	Hospital Tycoon	PC
TBA	Colin McRae DiRT	PC
TBA		Multi
TBA	The Darkness	360







NAG FUN FACT

Back in 1873, several mercenary insurgent groups took control of and held the Panama Canal before calling the whole thing off because they felt silly. (Especially since the canal wasn't completed until 1914. Ed)

EVENT:

SICORP LAN Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)

HISTORY:

1985: Hippies clash with police at Stonehenge: More than 300 people are arrested as police intercept a convoy of hippies going to Stonehenge.

2/3

Carnage.LAN Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)

EVENT:

INSOMNIA Roodeport (www.langames.co.za)

6

HISTORY:

1944: D-Day marks start of European invasion:

Thousands of Allied troops are landing on the beaches of Normandy in northern France at the start of a major offensive against the Germans.

HISTORY:

1942: Japanese beaten in Battle of Midway: The United States routs the Japanese Navy in a major three-day battle over a remote military base on Midway Island in the Pacific Ocean.

8

EVENT: MPLD Pretoria

(www.langames.co.za) EVENT:

ESWC '07 Emperor's Palace Johannesburg (www.langames.co.za)

9/10

EVENT:

[net]fusion Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)



14

HISTORY:

1940: Germany enters Paris: German troops march into Paris forcing French and allied troops to retreat. Developers of WWII FPS games rejoice.

15

EVENT: Organised Chaos Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)

16/17

HOLIDAY:

Youth Day

EVENT:

Liberty Benoni (www.langames.co.za)

18

HISTORY:

1965: Drink-drive limit introduced: The British government announces it will introduce a blood alcohol limit for drivers with penalties for those caught above it.



22

EVENT:

legacyComp Port Elizabeth (www.langames.co.za)

EVENT:

Insomnia Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)

23/24 EVENT:

Mayhem Boksburg (www.langames.co.za)

EVENT: HAVOC Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)

EVENT:

The Lair DotA Comp Edenvale



NAG:

29 EVENT:

Competitive Chaos Cape Town (www.langames.co.za)

EVENT:

L.A.N.ing SuX Pretoria (www.langames.co.za)











IПТЕRVIЕШ



Q&A: **OVERLORD**

Keep your eyes open for Overlord, one of the best underdog games appearing this year. How do we know this? After spending time with two builds of the game, it remains unbelievably addictive and charming. In fact, like the imp hordes in it, we just scream "More! More!" while raiding random desks in neighbouring offices. Nevertheless, we did have some time to interview Lennart Sas, Director and Lead Designer on Overlord at Triumph Studios, the developer responsible for the Age of Wonders series.

Let's be honest; Pikmin was a major inspiration for Overlord. We're sure that Dungeon Keeper and The Horde had something to do with it as well. Can you give a bit more background where the game comes

As fantasy fans, we took pity on those countless misunderstood Evil Overlords being killed by armies of valiant heroes. So, we thought it would be great to focus on an action RPG where you could rise to become the Overlord and offer a unique experience that no other RPG gives: no diluted good or evil, just Evil or Really Evil. We set out to develop an action RPG, not a strategy game, and soon the issue of what do with the horde of destructive minions arose. The control scheme we settled on might resemble that of Pikmin, but the reality is that we tried to closely match it to controls seen in existing action

In Overlord, you can be Evil or Very Evil. Villains as main characters are rare, even in games, but they are so much fun to play or watch. Why do you think more games don't use a theme similar to Overlord's?

RPGs, so people would feel right at home.

When playing the bad guy, it's important to get the tone right or you will alienate many people. You have to be careful that your Dark Lord game doesn't just appeal to fans of obscure metal bands. At the same time, you shouldn't make the game silly, or you'll lose your core gamers.

The game seems to tread a fine line between tongue-in-cheek humour and comic violence. Will part of your target audience be a young one? How are you making sure that the game won't be too excessive, violent or ironic for them?

The humour and subject matter in Overlord are

layered, so there is stuff that younger people pick up and then there is stuff that just older folks will get.
Sure, there is lots of mindless violence, but we steered clear of gory stuff. We've developed a game that will make people smile, grin and laugh - not repulse them.

Are we wrong in noticing quite a lot of *Lord of the Ring* parodies in the game, such as the halfling homes and the lead's Sauron-esque helmet?

The game is intended as a satire on classic fantasy and classic fantasy basically began with Tolkien! But in Overlord, many things are not as they seem: Halflings are mean gluttons, the Elves are lazy tree huggers, and the pious Paladin is a pervert! We also looked at areas outside of classic fantasy for inspiration. You might catch hints of Monty Python, Gremlins and The Dark Crystal.

What's in the story? Can we expect some valiant heroes in awesome armour, or other evil Overlords?

The game centres on defeating seven stereotypical Heroes who have fallen from their lofty morals after defeating your predecessor. For inspiration, we used the seven deadly sins - each one corrupting one Hero in turn. This affects their appearance, their skills, even their entire domain. So, you take on the enormous, gluttonous Melvin Underbelly, the Halfling Hero who has enslaved the human peasant folk to keep him fed, and make your way through the lot before finally, truly becoming the ruler of all - the Overlord.

How big is the game? Beyond Mellow Hills, the Elf forest, the Halfling tunnels, that burning castle and Heaven's Peak, how much more can gamers expect?

The game world is extensive with multiple surface domains linking to caves, palaces and dungeons. Other domains include the Great City of Heaven's Peak where the former Paladin, Sir William, has established a decadent rule while his city is ravished by a zombie-plague of suspect origins - the mountainous Dwarven domain, who have totally given into greed and captured the last few elves to work as slaves in the mines.

The control system works great on a controller. However, how will you make it work as well on a PC?

The Overlord is moved around in the same way as in many other third-person action games. On PC, this means using WASD and the mouse to look around. Primary actions are linked to hitting the space bar and the mouse buttons, so sending minions out is as simple as shooting a gun or fireball in another game. The Minion Al takes over when the minions are sent to their target, meaning they will smash, kill, push, pull or retrieve, depending on what the target was. When you want to sweep the whole horde around (right stick on gamepad), just hold the mouse buttons and use the mouse to move them.

For both console and PC, we tried to stick to interface conventions for both platforms, so people can get started right away. The PC version also supports dual-stick gamepads by the way!

What will multiplayer involve?

Multiplayer has three game modes: two competitive, and one cooperative. Slaughter is a form of deathmatch where score is determined by the number of kills on the enemy Overlord, his Minions and the random bystanders and enemies. Plunder mode is all about looting more stuff than your opponent. Survival mode is about teaming up with another Overlord and his horde, and working together in order to stay alive as long as possible against a never-ending stream of enemies.

Back to inspirations and *Pikmin. Overlord* refines many of the game mechanics behind the Nintendo title. Are there other great game 'types' you think should be explored more? Do critics too often label games like *Overlord* as clones?

I couldn't take critics who call games like Overlord





clones seriously, and I haven't actually heard any editors call *Overlord* a clone. *Overlord* brings a ton of innovation and genre-crossover to the table, without feeling diluted or a mishmash of incompatible ideas. This is especially true when compared to the endless stream of cookie cutter shooters, hack-and-slash RPGs, sports games and such. These games innovate, but often in very small ways. I think the huge leap *Overlord* has taken is part of the difficulty: you can only compare it to perhaps five other games in any meaningful way. There literally is no other

game that I'm aware of that offers the experience Overlord does. There are many genres that could use some fresh angles. Many great and successful games such as GTA and The Sims were the result of designers thinking outside of the box.

Do the villagers mind if we kill all the sheep? Will we get to kill other livestock as well?

Smart peasants generally run away from you when you are in a killing mood, as Evil Overlord doesn't mind 'harvesting' peasants for life force too! **NAG**



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

To BUY A GAME from Xbox LIVE Arcade (which represents the other half of the Xbox 360 game library), you need Microsoft Points. There are many ways to get Microsoft Points, but there is no way to buy Microsoft Points officially in South Africa. Microsoft Points scratch cards' aren't sold locally because Xbox LIVE is not officially supported in South Africa. The options that remain are to try and buy the Points via the Xbox 360 itself (which rejects South African credit cards), the Microsoft Points Website (which rejects South African credit cards), or to try various online vendors. Some people have had success initially in buying Points via Microsoft, either through the Website or the Xbox 360, but Microsoft frowns upon this and is slowly rejecting cards as it notices them. South Africa is not an official Xbox LIVE region, and South African credit cards, with their South African billing addresses, are slowly being blocked from making Points purchases via official channels. I attempted to purchase Points using my credit card via the Xbox 360 and was rejected, but was still billed a R7 service fee for the attempt.

The major online vendors available to South Africans are AnimeWorX, Take2, Have2Have and eBay. At the time of writing, AnimeWorX imports its Points cards from Australia and sells the 1,500 Points card for R205. Take2 imports its cards from the US as well as the UK, and sells the 1,600 Points card (US) for R209 and the 2,100 Points card (UK) for R313. Have2Have imports its Points cards from the US, and sells the 1,600 for R229.

Buying from eBay is a slightly more confusing matter, as every retailer on eBay sells at a different price and in a different way. Generally, 1,600 Points cards (IUS) retail for between \$15 to \$28 (R111 to R198) depending on who you buy from, while the 2,100 Points cards (IUK) sell for \$29 (R205) on average. If you choose a Digital Delivery purchase on eBay, you don't have to pay for shipping the physical scratch card to you, and the Points code is e-mailed to you instantly once payment has been received.

I was reluctant to purchase Points off eBay, as I had already once before experienced credit card fraud where someone used my credit card information to purchase Points (via the official channels, can you believe it). Neither Microsoft Support nor the MasterCard fraud division was of any help, and it has now been over three months with no remittance on the fraudulent charges. Microsoft Support has also not been helpful and remains unwilling to cooperate. In fact, it took several irate phone calls

before they would even believe that the fraud had occurred: I was repeatedly accused of having made the purchases myself, which clearly I didn't.

Nevertheless, I put that fear behind me and attempted to purchase a 1,600 Points bundle from an eBay seller, opting for a Digital Delivery offer since I didn't want to pay for shipping. After signing up with eBay (being forced to enter my credit card information, and being instantly billed R7 in 'service fees'), I chose the item I wanted to purchase. I was then forced to sign up at PayPal (as the buyer wouldn't accept the money any other way), and was also billed a R7 service fee. Afterwards, I was able to pay for the item via PayPal. Initially, the Digital Delivery page, which was supposed to give me the code I had purchased, kept throwing up 'Error' with no explanation. Repeated attempts at refreshing the page eventually yielded my code, which I entered into the Redeem Code part of the Xbox official Website. I can gladly report that I now have 1,600 Microsoft Points in my LIVE account with which I can purchase Settlers of Catan from Xbox LIVE Arcade.

When New Zealand got local LIVE support (back in the days of the Xbox), accounts could not be migrated. New Zealand gamers had to create entirely new accounts, forfeiting their Gamertags, rankings and other elements that were tied to LIVE accounts. I don't expect Xbox LIVE to launch officially in South Africa, but if it did, all the local gamers who have already created LIVE accounts by setting their region to US or UK may find themselves in an uncomfortable position.

Finally, there is one thought I would like to leave you with. When you buy a PlayStation 3 locally, you can sign up for the PlayStation Network (the online offering from Sony, equivalent to Xbox LIVE). Locally, the PlayStation Network is officially supported and with it, the PlayStation Store. You can buy games from the PlayStation Store, just like Xbox LIVE Arcade. The difference here is that prices in the PlayStation Store are shown in rand, and local credit cards are accepted.

It seems I'm not the only one who disagrees with Microsoft Xbox LIVE in terms of how South Africa has to do things: www.sayyoursay.com is a Website and petition started by enthusiast Xbox 360 owners who believe things could be done better, with the support of the South African Xbox 360 community. At the time of writing, over 200 Xbox 360 owners have expressed their support for proper Xbox LIVE in South Africa. NAG



Prepare to do battle! Vodafone live! is proud to bring you 300,

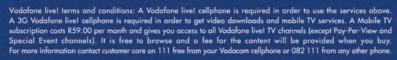
the greatest war game ever.



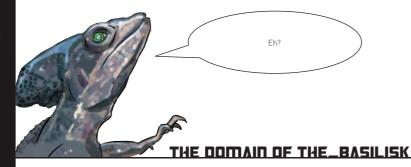
How do I use Vodafone live?

Press the Vodafone live! button on your cellphone.









ASK NOT

WHO'S CONTROLLING YOUR INFORMATION???" read a rather Orwellian-looking poster that appeared throughout the London underground recently. "Did you know 75% of online information goes through the same company?" read another, and a third: "Should one company really control all the Web's information?"

Intrigued? Many Londoners were. The posters didn't appear to advertise anything, and only displayed a small Website address – informationrevolution.org – at the bottom. It was the .org that got me, I have to admit. I'd been under the impression that only non-profit organisations were eligible for those sorts of domain names. Could it be, I wondered, a charity campaigning against some sinister monopoly? Were philanthropists actually willing to fund a worthy cause for once? And what was this horrible dark force threatening the freedom of the Internet?

However, there's an important corollary of Murphy's Law that I'd momentarily overlooked. Moreover, it should've also occurred to any other intelligent person standing in front of one of those posters. Simply stated: if something can possibly be retarded, it will be. And dear God, did this turn out to be retarded.

A quick look at the Website revealed that this little guerrilla marketing campaign had been organised by Ask.com, and that the looming electronic menace wasn't – as I'd previously guessed – Microsoft, or – as I'd considered as an outside, though outrageous possibility – some devious yet fascinating CIA plot. No, the Dark Side itself was embodied by none other than... Google. I paused, and must have looked about as astonished as I felt. "Google?" I thought. "But Google is my friend."

There are a number of obvious problems with this campaign (so obvious that I shouldn't need to state them at all actually). Firstly, Google doesn't control anything. A completely unsubtle distinction exists between controlling the order in which search results are displayed (which is the worst it could possibly do) and controlling the Internet. Until Google starts telling people what to put on their Websites, I remain unconvinced.

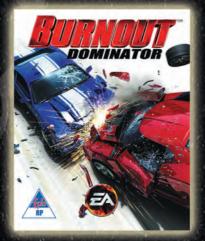
Secondly, Google is – in case anybody hasn't realised yet – a search engine. [Yes, Messrs Page and Brin provide other services too, but I don't think Ask.com is particularly worried about Gmail or Google Earth.] Search engines index and store information: the Internet doesn't go through Google, Google goes through the Internet. We should all be more worried about China's nationwide proxy, or the US Government's attempts to regulate Web 2.0.

Finally, Google isn't a monopoly in the strict sense of the word. As the crack smokers behind this campaign admit, there are plenty of other choices. It's just that Google is so ridiculously better than all of its rivals. We simply don't need (and don't want) to use anything else. When Google's services drop in quality, we'll stop using it. While it remains God's gift to the information age, we will gladly continue.

Nevertheless, there's inspiration to be drawn from this whole episode. Ask.com made one fatal mistake, and that was to allow people to post comments on informationrevolution.org. Right from the very first post, it was clear that the revolutionaries were fooling no one – that is, no one who knew anything about the subject and felt compelled to post a comment. The feedback was so overwhelmingly negative that Ask.com was forced to take down the original Website and withdraw most of the initial adverts, replacing the hard-line strategy with some mild notion of choice being a good thing for its own sake.

We all agree, of course. And we choose Google. NAG





FA.I03405514

AVAILABLE ON:

PlayStation₂

1-2 Players



FA.I03405094

AVAILABLE ON:

PlayStation 2

XBOX 360.

1-2 Players



EAJ03405407

AVAILABLE ON:

PlayStation 2

PC 👺

PLAYSTATION.3

XBOX 360.

1-2 Players



NOJ03405512

AVAILABLE ON:

PlayStation₂2

1-2 Players

www.ea.co.za

ANOTHER new store opening soon!

Add: Shop no. I, Fourways View, cnr Witkoppen and Cedar Road Tel: (011) 467 9526/527/529

West Rand
Add: Shop 25, Retail Crossing-West
Rand, Cnr Hendrik Potgleter
and Nic Diederichs Boulevard, Wilgeheuwel, Strubensvallei (011) 475 0610/21/41

Shop no. 18, East Rand Value Mall, Rietfontein Road (011) 823 3000/700/800

Woodmead Shop I, Woodmead Square, Waterval Crescent. (011) 802 6356/380/389

Get Lost!

Experience a MEGASTORE with an ATTITUDE!!!



by Megan Hughes

IN DEFENCE OF THE JOCKS

OHDEAR, IT SEEMS that last month someone forgot to give Miktar (Little Mikky) his pills (those little blue ones you can only get from people who have studied for many years to earn the title psychiatrist so that they can analyse everyone's head). Anyway, it may just be down to withdrawal symptoms, but Miktar, in his aged and delicate state, seemed a little tense last month. Maybe I was the only one who noticed that his column 'Geek Revolt', in the May issue of *NAG*, was a little – how should I put this – off.

After carefully pursuing the length of the argument he posed last month, I simply couldn't let a counterargument go unwritten. One reason being that so many readers may just blindly accept what they read in their beloved magazine, which may lead, in this case, to a skewed perception of reality (i.e. what is really happening in the world). Another reason is simply because I love to have the last word.

Firstly, though, I must just comment on the title. Heaven knows what Miktar was thinking when he chose it, but apparently he forgot the infamous and ambiguous (having two meanings) line: "Sir, the peasants are revolting!" I'm quite sure this is not the kind of association Mikky wanted to make with the geeks (a group in which he, apparently, includes himself). Moreover, who chose that image that accompanied the column? Scary is all I can say.

For clarity's sake, Miktar included his definition of what a jock was: "someone who gets confounded and confused when he is confronted with someone who doesn't enjoy the same things that he does." Fair enough, though his use of the masculine plural leads me to suspect that Miktar has never met a female with this particular mindset. However, to ensure even more clarity, I'll include my own definition of a geek: someone who feels that their hobby or interest is superior to all others, but cannot accept the appearance of new people in his 'domain' (especially if they have denounced his hobby or interest before). To anyone who is still confused, this means that a jock is not necessarily a sporty male (which would be the stereotype) and a geek would not necessarily be a gamer.

I do, honestly, believe that it is unnecessary to bully or belittle anyone simply because their likes and dislikes are not your own.

Jock McJock (a title bestowed upon Miktar's high school nemesis by Miktar) was definitely a little small-minded to 'mock' poor little Mikky. Technically, though, Miktar is just swapping positions by insulting that guy. I guess there's no love lost there, but no sympathy from me either. In addition, Miktar stated quite happily that he "didn't give a s***... and what some Jock says doesn't bother me," which seems ironic since decades later Miktar still remembers the guy.

Anyway, Miktar's main argument is where I find the biggest holes. It seems that he resents the presence of jocks in the gaming scene. These jocks have finally caved in to the appeal of games, albeit a bit behind Miktar himself, and somehow this appreciation of games is simply too little too late for Mikky.

What it seems Miktar has failed to realise is that the only reason gaming as a culture can survive is because of these so-called jocks. They are truly the 'masses' and gaming companies can make more money out of them. This means that more and more games will be produced (some that he will like and most that he won't, simply because everyone's taste differs), which means a variety to choose from

Let me explain this by taking it out of the gaming context. In South Africa, we have a huge number of criminals, each with the right to vote. Moreover, although our government should protect the rights and interests of those who obey the law, it's ultimately the number of votes that count to get the power that they crave. Put so eloquently to the editor of another South African magazine, Noseweek, by a reader: "Who, in any democracy, would wish to alienate such a large and growing constituency?" [Noseweek issue 91: page 4.]

Bringing the gaming context back into the mix: which gaming company would want to alienate the 'masses'? It's just business and as they say in Mafia movies, nothing personal. My advice to Miktar, and other gamers who might tend to have a similar view on the world, take your little blue pills and forget about it. Buy the games you want to play, play the multiplayer ones with the people you want to play with, and allow everyone else to do the same in a style they choose (whether perceived as intelligent or not). NAG





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HE LAMENT OF HE GAMING WIDOWER

The following is based on a true story.

, FOR REASONS I'M not going to go into, have many games on my cellphone. I mean a huge amount. Some people have filled their phones with illicit music files; some with poorly-composed photographs featuring blurry thumbs right up against the lens. When my phone bitches about not having any space left, it's because of the games.

It's not really surprising: I have long been a vehement advocate of gaming on all platforms, including cellphone handsets. Gamers play everything, in theory, so that's just it. I have many games for my PC, for my consoles, and for my handhelds (phone included). It hasn't always been the case. My acquisition of phone games has been fairly recent.

Okay... enough with the explanation and on with the story. My girlfriend is a complete non-gamer. She hates games. She doesn't understand why we play them. She thinks that they're a waste of time, as many people (not just women) do. Or, at least, she did until she discovered a particular game on my cellphone. Everything changed.

I need digress: I'm not a typical gamer-boyfriend. She is not a gaming widow. That said, I do spend quite some time playing games, which she quietly puts up with. She says she doesn't mind, but I secretly know that she'd rather have me giving her foot massages than blowing up enemy pixels. Nevertheless, I do spend large amounts of time with her - at least an hour a day. Every now and then, a new game crosses my path that consumes more of my time than is healthy (like Command & Conquer 3), but that is the exception these days, rather

Right, back to my girlfriend discovering a particular game on my cellphone... She discovered it by accident (I think she scans my messages for evidence of any other girlfriends, which there aren't) and, for reasons known only to the shadowy forces that govern the universe, started playing it. And that was the end of it - the end of life as I knew it.

"Honey," I started the other day, buttering her up so that I could get some quality time with my PC, "do you mind awfully much if I go play a game for a little while?"

when I make this request, but this time around, her eyes were glued to the little LCD, her thumbs performing a quick, erratic tango across the number pad. There was an odd, glazed quality to those eyes, and a focus that I had never seen before. It was a strange combination, and certainly never something I had seen in her.

computerised soldiers exactly who their male parental unit was. I glanced

at my watch and noticed that the obligatory time period for her coming into my study and hinting that I should spend some time with her had long passed. Bonus! I carried on building and blasting.

After a long while, my stomach started growling. I naturally started looking forward to one of my girlfriend's wonderfully crafted meals, and stuck my head out of the study door. "Honey, what's for dinner?" I asked sweetly.

"Dunno."

"But I'm hungry..."

"You know where the fridge is. And the stove's right next to it." I should have noticed the signs then, but I didn't. I made myself a sandwich instead.

However, a sandwich cannot kill a man-sized hunger - no way, no how - particularly not when one has been hard at work obliterating enemy forces. I decided to lay down the law.

"Woman! Dinner! Now!"

Nevertheless, we have a loving

relationship. I know that she'll

come bail me out of jail

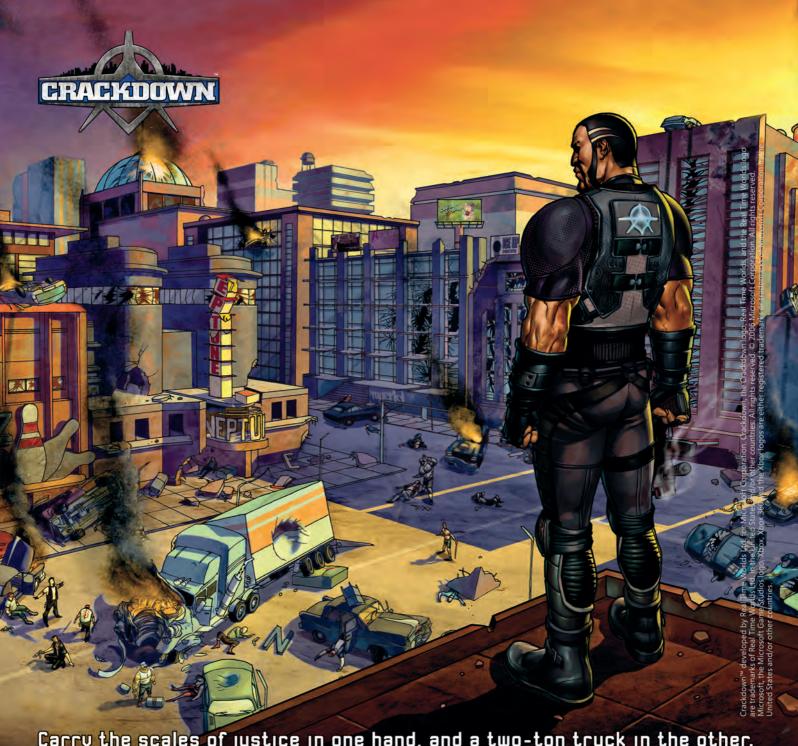
and even take me to the

doctor to deal with

my injuries... I just

She's small, but she has quite a right hook. It was at the exact moment of impact, as that little fist crashed into my eyeball (it is small enough to bypass the protective ridges provided by the brow and cheek bones, squishing the eye completely) that I came to realise obsession. However, it was only when she started wailing on me with a frying pan that I could see the depths that it runs to. It's an ugly beast, obsession. It grants a petite woman the strength to physically throw a man out of his own house, and to call the cops when he tries to break back in





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XBOX.COM/CRACKDOWN













PUT YOUR HANDS UP 4 DETROIT

Put your hands up 4 Detroit. We're not sure what this song by Fedde le Grand has to do with this feature, Detroit or wrestling, but it seemed a decent enough approach to kick things off with. The alternative introduction had something to do with comparing wrestling to tennis with all its grunting, lobbing and smashing, but it ended up reading lame and was unanimously vetoed by the editorial team. So... moving along. THQ thought it might be a nice idea to fly NAG to Detroit to give SmackDown! vs. RAW 2008 a feel and have a weekend of fun and games on them. We also thought it was a good idea, as part of the trip included going to WrestleMania 23 (can you say hurrah?), meeting with a few of the wrestlers (gulp, what nice muscles you have lady), attending the THQ Superstar Challenge, as well as having a quick chat with the game's developers and one of the creative managers from THQ. There's plenty to get through here chumps, so listen up good or it'll be a steel chair to the pip. Feel intimidated?

ICENSED SPORTS FRANCHISES ARE stuck in a rut... Each year, the new batch arrives and it appears that only the most astutely trained videogame journalists can spot the differences between them. It's a money making, cash-cow milking, rehashed travesty that they get away with year after year because the game-buying public seems to have more gold then sense. Luckily for virtual-wrestling fans around the world, THQ is well aware of this phenomenon, and has always managed to raise the bar with each new installation of the SmackDown! vs. RAW franchise. This year, however, things are a little different because they're developing on three new platforms (PS3, DS and the Wii) and are aiming higher than ever with new features and more spit and polish than ever before. The Nintendo versions of the game are bringing more diversity to the table than ever before, with stylus-controlled wrestlers on antics on the Wii. Two things the developers take very seriously when planning the next iteration of the franchise are fan feedback and media reviews. At the presentation in Detroit,

THQ Creative Manager, Cory Ledesma, demonstrated the first in-game footage from 2008 and outlined four key objectives in terms of their strategy for SmackDown! vs. RAW 2008. This was after highlighting the tremendous success this license has enjoyed over the years (3.6 million units of the 2007 version shipped, for example). First up, THQ is looking to create a clearer differentiation between the wrestling superstars, which is largely pushed along by motion capturing and voiceover recording sessions. Second on the list is avoiding periods of inactivity: players must be actively involved and challenged in the game all the time. Thirdly, upgrading the animation system, which brings us back to differentiating between wrestlers, and finally, rolling the game out across three new platforms. The other good news is that ECW will feature prominently in SmackDown! vs. RAW 2008: it'll be completely integrated into the franchise, including the superstars, arenas, weapons, commentary and events. The other big announcement is the WWE 24/7 mode (a combination of the Season and General Manager modes from the previous



PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii



version). Here you take a superstar, either established or user-created, and turn them into a legend using multiple character development options, statistical tracking and various career goals. However, that's not all. Also shown was a new Struggle Submission System, eight unique fighting styles, better out-of-ring action, updated rosters, more environmental hotspots and improved online community support, and they've also cut down on the loading times. The 2008 version of SmackDown! vs. RAW is certainly much more than just a fresh coat of makeup on an ageing diva.

CREATING A LEGEND

Perhaps the most exciting and involved aspect of SmackDown! vs. RAW 2008 will be the WWE 24/7 mode. Think of this as wrestling meets role-playing: players can create their own unique wrestler, start at the bottom and work their way into the WWE Hall of Fame. Think the equivalent of three years of game time with numerous matches, special events, anguish, training, injuries and heaps of statistics, all aimed at specific career goals. If this sounds like too much hard work, players can also start with an established wrestler and see where things go from there. The 24/7 game mode is for those players who like to see a little depth in their wrestling addiction. The 'Create-a-Wrestler' area has also been retooled, so there are many more options and $tweaks\ that\ can\ be\ applied\ to\ the\ final\ result.$ This is apparently where art and gaming meet. If this isn't your thing, then selecting a match and climbing into the ring for some straightforward pounding is encouraged. Not only is it encouraged, but actively supported with eight different fighting styles: submission artist, hardcore, brawler, showman, dirty, technician, powerhouse and high-flier. Each of these styles will determine how your wrestler behaves in the ring, and each has positive and negative consequences as well as special moves, such as using chairs in the ring (filed under dirty). Of course, certain styles suit certain wrestlers. Bobby Lashley, for example, is a powerhouse player. The developers have also added an interesting twist when it comes to submission holds with the new Struggle Submission System Players will now have an element of control

and can actively participate during submission holds, instead of simply watching predetermined animated sequences. The analogue sticks now control how much pressure you apply during the hold. The more pressure, the more effort required, which might leave your wrester weaker if your opponent breaks the hold. The opponent in the hold can also choose between offering no resistance at all or try breaking the lock by twiddling the analogue stick. If submission isn't your game, then simply jump out of the ring, grab the metal stairs and put the hard back into hardcore. For fear of turning this into a laundry list of overly hyped new features, we'll end things here. Rest assured, from what was witnessed in Detroit, SmackDown! vs. RAW 2008 is going to take the challenge to the players like never before. Moreover, it doesn't hurt that they've improved the AI, graphics, commentary and basically everything else between. It's going to be a very good year for wrestling fans no matter which platform is preferred.

THE NINTENDO ADVANTAGE

were very scant and not much could be confirmed or denied - even after speaking to the developers. Control in the game will be handled by the stylus, and there will be 20 superstars available. This is about all the information available at the time of going to print. The Wii version, however, is another story entirely, and a brief presentation saw two of the developers fighting it out on the Wii version. The best example saw one player climb onto the ropes, and using the controller, proceeded to pound the other player with repeated up and down motions How much speed and height the player put into his or her real-world actions determine the on-screen results. Yes, it's better than you can imagine! The presentation was somewhat repetitive and grappling your opponent looked overly complicated. Nevertheless, the appeal will lie in mastering the control system and getting a workout while you play - never mind the fun to be had by really pounding your opponent into submission and breaking a sweat while doing it. **NAG**





As part of WrestleMania weekend 16, wrestlers also in Detroit at the Gem Theatre, and we had an opportunity began. First up was Mr Kennedy, who is every bit his character in and out of the ring. He has a PlayStation 2 THQ not getting the size of his muscles exactly right in the game: they're much bigger apparently. Next we throughout the evening seemed to be a question of whether or not THQ has managed to fit all the egos into how realistic the graphics are or how accurately the wrestlers are captured, they'll never be happy with the about how useful it is on long road trips. MVP is a big fan of the SmackDown! vs. RAW game, and seemed happy with his virtual version. Mickie James was the first diva and has even played a long way into GTA: San Andreas. to do her own motion-captured entrance. The entrances capture all the wrestlers, but time is always an issue Melina and Johnny Nitro were next. Melina spoke at length about doing the voiceover for her character in the travels with the wrestlers around the country, capturing the interviews, we watched 16 wrestlers play against RAW 2007. Of the bunch, Elijah Burke ended up winning. The whole event was rather surreal considering how

GAMES IN WRESTLING'S HEADLOCK

THE POPULARITY OF WRESTLING GAMES IS CERTAINLY NOTHING NEW. IN FACT, GAMES BASED ON THE 'SPORT' HAVE BEEN AROUND SINCE THE 1980S. WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MORE NOTEWORTHY WRESTLING GAMES OF THE PAST TWO AND A HALF DECADES TO FIND OUT WHERE WRESTLING GAMES STARTED, AND HOW THEY'VE CHANGED.

EARLY DAYS

The first wrestling game to speak of was Tag Team Wrestling on the NES, a very basic effort with only a few available fictitious the option of tag-team competition, as well as single-player tournaments. It's remarkable only for being the pioneer of its genre. A better-known NES and Master System outing was *Pro Wrestling*, which featured a variety of colourful characters that captured audiences despite the rudimentary play dynamic. Competition to Nintendo's in-house releases came in the form of Tecmo World Wrestling, which introduced character's abilities. The 1980s also saw the release of the first WWF videogame, WWF WrestleMania, which featured the likes of Hulk Hogan, Bam Bam Bigelow, and Andre the Giant.

THE 'GOLDEN AGE'

The 1990s saw the shift of wrestling games onto 16-bit platforms, like the SNES and Sega Mega Drive. It also marked a dramatic rise in the popularity of professional wrestling and the games based on it, starting with 1992's WWF Super WrestleMania, a follow-up to the previous NES title. Major steps forward were taken with 1993's WWF Royal Rumble, which added a number of new game modes, including the Royal Rumble match itself, as well as sixman, tag-team matches. In addition to an updated roster featuring such personas as Bret Hart, The Undertaker and Shawn Michaels, it also introduced a useable steel chair, as well as signature moves for the characters.

THE 3D REVOLUTION

1996 heralded the arrival of true 3D wrestling games on the PlayStation with Activision's unlicensed *Power Move Pro Wrestling*, which brought a new degree of realism to the genre, despite its lack of official affiliation. It set the tone for such titles as *WCW vs. the World*, the first *WCW* game to make any impact on























the gaming market. Published by THQ (who now publishes the SmackDown! series of games), it featured 13 WCW wrestlers, including Hulk Hogan, Lex Luger and Ric Flair, as well as 47 'fictional' characters, which closely resembled other real-life wrestlers from around the world.

The WWF made its jump to the PlayStation with the two-dimensional, arcade-style WWF In Your House in 1996, but its first real success came with WWF War Zone in 1998. This highly-anticipated game not only featured some of the edgiest characters around, including Stone Cold Steve Austin, Kane and The Rock, but it also introduced a deeper career mode, a more complex grappling system than had ever been seen before, various match types (including steel-cage and weapon bouts), as well as the first Create-a-Wrestler mode found in any major licensed game.

MODERN-DAY GAMES

Acclaim's tenure of publishing WWF titles came to an end with 1999's WWF Attitude, a game quite similar to the previous year's War Zone. THQ acquired the WWF license, and published a spate of games on the Nintendo 64, Sega Dreamcast, and the Sony PlayStation. The most significant of these releases was WWF SmackDown!, released in 2000, which

featured a simplified and more effective control system, as well as the inclusion of backstage areas to fight in, and a fleshed-out season mode, complete with storyline.

The first next-generation wrestling game, appearing on the PS2, GameCube and Xbox, was Acclaim's 2001 release Legends of Wrestling, which featured historical greats such as The Road Warriors, THQ continued its SmackDown! series with the disappointing WWF SmackDown! Just Bring It, which roster. Things were set right by THQ with 2002's WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth (the first game to bear the new WWE moniker) and its follow-up, WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain. The series was subsequently refined with WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW and its 2006 and 2007 follow-ups, which introduced, among other features, 'buried alive' next-generation debut with the upcoming release of WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2008 on the Wii, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3.

THE 'CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE'

Widely touted in Japan, but virtually unheard of

elsewhere in the world is the Fire Pro Wrestling series, first released in 1989 for the TurboGrafx-16. Super Fire Pro Wrestling X Premium, a 1996 SNES release, featured one of the first Create-a-Wrestler modes, as well as an extensive roster of over 100 fictitious characters, all closely based on real-life wrestlers. The game still enjoys much popularity in the emulator gaming scene. The latest title in the series, Fire Pro Wrestling Returns, was released for the PS2 in 2005, and is still regarded as one of the best wrestling games around.

OTHER MODERN GAMES

After losing its WCW license, Electronic Arts went on to publish 2003's *Def Jam Vendetta*, a hip-hop-themed wrestling game featuring artists from the Def Jam recording label. Subsequent sequels, however, have strayed from the wrestling formula, in favour of a more arcade-style fighting game dynamic.

2004's Rumble Roses for the PS2, and Rumble Roses XX, released in 2006 for the Xbox 360, feature a fictitious (and mostly scantily-clad) all-female line-up of wrestlers, and despite any preconceptions about the series' subject matter, the games are in fact respected titles, and have gone on to gather quite a cult following. NAG

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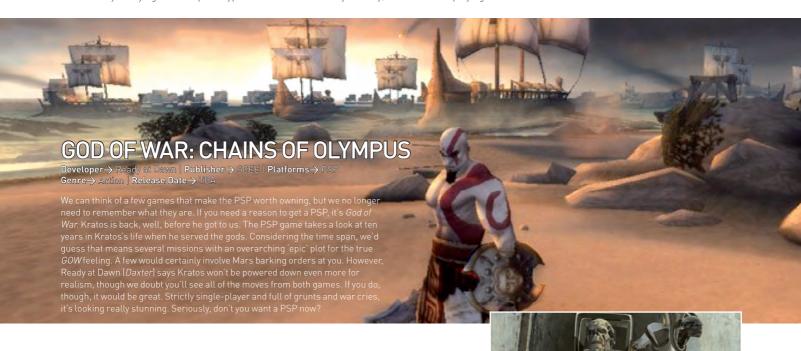
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MOVE TO THE GROOVE

TSEEMS AS IF the game release schedule is definitely more balanced this year, perhaps because publishers are now releasing more casually instead of keeping things locked up tight until E3 hits (where they can splash all their money on trying to wind up the hyperbole machine like a toy monkey).

Regardless, this new rhythm certainly makes it easier on the gaming muscle, since there seems to always be something just over the horizon that you could potentially want to consume, and something out right now that you should be playing.



CONDEMNED 2: BLOODSHOT

Developer→ Monolith | Publisher→ SEGA Platforms→ 360, PS3 Genre→ Horror | Release Date→ Q4 2007

Poor Ethan Hunt. The events from the first Condemned have left him shaken and he quit his job as a special investigator. Clearly, the guy from F.E.A.R. is tougher, but he never had one-on-one battles with insane bums armed with lead pipes crawling around derelict buildings. There's just something about a screaming madman brandishing an axe who is running towards you. Ethan's partner has disappeared after investigating another series of gruesome murders, and Ethan is asked to try and solve the case. Condemned 2, once again developer by accomplished team Monolith, will feature more of the intense action the first game delivered, as well as crawling around nasty places looking for clues. This version will also include multiplayer with many modes. Unfortunately, a PC version hasn't been mentioned and we're hoping that's just an oversight, since the game was quite popular on the platforms it was released on.



WARDEVIL: ENIGMA

Developer→ Ignition | Publisher→ Ignition
Platforms→ PS3 | Genre→ Action | Release Date→ TBA

WarDevil is about war, we suppose. All that anyone really knows is that it exists and that it's coming soon enough. However, developer Ignition has remained hush about the project, only saying that it's "focusing on cutting-edge technology" that will fuse "both game and movie technologies together." All that on the super-duper PS3 hardware. Sounds really exciting, but apart from that, all we can say about the game is that it involved two years of R&D.



ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Developer→ Legendo Entertainment | Publisher→ Ascaron Platforms→ PC | Genre→ Action | Release Date→ July 2007

This upcoming arcade-flight game aims to bring a light-hearted story to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Ah, yes, when we think of Pearl Harbor, we think 'light-hearted'. Actually, we think of the movie, which was terrible and rather pointless. Still, while some people might not like the idea of a more relaxed take on the attack, for the rest of us it will mean another fun, easy air combat game with charming WWII heroes and villains. The game will feature a character for both sides of the attack.

OBSCURE II

Developer→ Hydravision | **Publisher**→ Playlogic Platforms→ PC, PS2, Wii

Genre→ Horror | Release Date→ Q3 2007

ObsCure was a cool little survival horror. It introduced co-op play for two players, so two of you could crawl around the dark, moody school, trying to figure out what was going on. That basically meant that both of you stood at the bottom of the stairs, trying to convince the other guy to go up first. It was tragically short, though, and received a lukewarm response, so we never thought we'd see a sequel. Nevertheless, here it is. The kids from the school massacre have moved on to college, but a mysterious new plant marks the start of more monstrous activities. This time, an Al character can help single players, while the drop-in co-op will always be available. There will be six characters to use, and you'll be able to switch to characters in different sections of the game. So, expect large, nervewracking puzzles. If the length's okay, maybe people will finally notice this series.



SPACE STATION TYCOON

Developer→ Namco Bandai America | Publisher→ Namco Bandai Games Platforms -> Wii | Genre -> Management | Release Date -> Q4 2007

High-strung monkeys? We're in! It has ninja weird enough, Shawn makes a living setting up space stations all over the place and around the galaxy, including puzzle solving Space Station Tycoon will probably sport some



STUNTMAN: IGNITION

Developer→ Paradigm | Publisher→ THQ Platforms→ PS2, PS3, 360 | Genre→ Racing | Release Date→ August 2007

Some of us are annoyed that the first Stuntman simply lifted the idea from locally developed Chase, but you can't deny you're happy to see a new title from the series on the way. The setup is still the same: you are a stunt professional who is trying to make a name in the cutthroat world of Hollywood. That means you'll be doing some rather stupid and insane stuff (professionally supervised, of course) to impress everyone and get more work doing really stupid and insane stuff. The action takes place over six different films, totalling 36 different stunt runs with around 25 vehicles. There will also be commercials and tournaments, while in multiplayer you can challenge other stunt drivers to match your skill. You will even be able to create your own stunt setups. The only thing we can't really recall is whether Stuntman was really that good? Hopefully, Stuntman: Ignition, courtesy of the likes of FlatOut and Burnout, will bring along a really nails-in-the-dashboard title



ШНАТ ШЕ ШАПТ

PUZZLE QUEST [XBLA]C'mon already! Make with the *Puzzle* Quest! We fell in love with the PC demo and the delicious Nintendo DS version, but now it's time for the main course: beautiful HD artwork complete with LIVE multiplayer duelling takes the game and raises it a notch. Crafting in a puzzle game? Genius!

PRINCE OF PERSIA [XBLA]

New traps, new puzzles, new enemies – a completely new, fresh, classic Prince of Persia experience, complete with the Prince model from Sands of the "we're going to sell you the original game at a new price and run it through a filter that sharpens the edges" crap. The new *Prince of Persia* remake for LIVE Arcade actually had some effort put into it with upgraded designs, animations and visuals.

STARCRAFT 2 [PC]

So many happy hours were spent in the original StarCraft, you'd have to be made of ice not to want more Zerg, more Protoss and more Terran action. Sure, Blizzard no longer consists of the same people who developed the original StarCraft (practically everyone has left, with newcomers filling the seats), but if they just throw enough money at it and stick to the formula, they can release an awesome game (doing things that way seems to work for EA).

RAGE 2007 [RL]

Only a few more months, and it's time for rAge again! This year promises to be the biggest, most rockin' rAge yet, with a NAG LAN@rAge to seat two thousand gamers! Sure, it's not OVER 9,000, but two thousand seems plenty. Why, at 32 people per server you could have 62 (and a half) servers! Quake 4, Counter-Strike, DotA and Battlefield 2142 could each have 15 servers with 32 people fragging, capping and controlling it out.

DIVINE DIVINITY 2 [PC]

The first game was a scandalously underrated classic, and its sort-ofbut-not-really sequel, Beyond Divinity, proved that Larian Studios is capable of turning out more of the good stuff. whispered rumours, but we really hope it pans out. However, we hope they get more voice actors this time, because while having a man doing the voices for all the female characters in the game certainly was funny, it wasn't very serious.

FALLOUT 3 [PC]

Oh man, let's hit the post-apocalyptic wasteland. We've no idea yet what Bethesda plans to do with this most hallowed of RPGs, but we'll happily settle for a gauss rifle, Power Armour, our trusty canine pal, Dogmeat, and a spouse we can sell into slavery. Which really means - more of the same, please. Kthnx.



THAS BEEN NEARLY ten years since the StarCraft storyline has seen any action. It has also been nearly ten years of endless rumors regarding a sequel. The two neversay-dies of game rumors are probably StarCraft II and Diablo III – and both were hotly anticipated when Blizzard mentioned a new game announcement at an event in Seoul this year. A better venue couldn't have been chosen. Throughout StarCraft's ten year and fourteen million unit reign over the strategy genre, the Republic of Korea has been a staunch supporter. Competitive gaming is very big in the country, and StarCraft sits at the top of that industry.

That's why Blizzard doesn't want to mess too much with such a loved and adored formula. StarCraft II will be very similar to the first game and a new race will not debut; instead the staple forces of the Terran, Protoss and Zerg return. The story, though, starts four years after the events of Brood Wars - which, as some fans have pointed out, details the end of the Terran race. But they aren't down for the count and return under the control of the Dominion empire.

There is no doubt that many people want more of the storyline that has captured the series' many fans. While Blizzard has remained mum about most aspects of what will happen, it has called the story epic, and mentioned that the Xel'Naga will show up again. Campaign players will be rewarded with elements unique to the single-player side, but the real focus will, as you might have quessed, fall on multiplayer.

There's no way to truly explain how popular StarCraft is, except to mention that for the past decade it has maintained the top RTS spot amongst pro, amateur and casual gamers. Blizzard's mighty Warcraft III has been just as prolific, but it has only been around since 2002. So Blizzard is giving a lot of attention to making sure the game remains authentic. Yes, that means there will be plenty of rushing, and players who invest time into learning counters for units will be rewarded handsomely. Taking things a step further, StarCraft II's engine will be able to render large maps and numbers of units. As with the original, micro-management will take the backseat in favour of faster gameplay.

According to the designers, a pro game will average fifteen minutes.

Even though the races and their distinct styles are kept as is, new units and abilities will debut in all factions. The Protoss will be able to warp to line-of-sight locations, allowing players to shift huge armies if necessary, and will terrorise its neighbors with a mothership super unit. There's no word on what other sides will have to counter that, but the designers are stressing balance as opposed to just copying and pasting the same units across the battle lines.

While no release date has been announced, our guess is somewhere between late this year and middle of 2008. StarCraft II will be released on the PC and Mac; it will include support for DirectX 10, but the game will be scalable. Battle.net will also get a major overhaul, though StarCraft players will still be able to use the service. You've been asking for it for years: now it's finally arrived. But what about Diablo III? Hey, there's always Hellgate. NAG

James Francis

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

360

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB

WINFIELD GAMING



















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FINAL FANTASY XIII

THE START OF THE PS3-exclusive line-up has begun with fans of all types flocking to its banner. One of the next in line is the new Final Fantasy title. This game will be one of three new games by Square-Enix set in the same universe, but none of them is a sequel or prequel – rather, they're all separate stories with different characters.

Final Fantasy XIII has been named Fabula Nova Crystallis (which means, 'The New Tale of The Crystal' in Latin), and along with the all-new 'White Engine', it will be released on the PS3 with one of the three titles to be released for cellphones as well. Agito will be released for mobile phones, while Versus will be the other PS3 title.

So far, in terms of what the developers

at Square-Enix have and the few available trailers of the game, it looks as though the combat system will be in real time and similar to that of the previous two generations of *Final Fantasy* games. With very realistic graphics capabilities and character stories, fans might consider *Final Fantasy XIII* to be the best in the series so far. Familiar game aspects such as 'Gravity Bomb' (previously 'Gravity') as well as 'Overclock' ('Limit Break') are also included. 'Overclock' will also resemble the Trance mode from before.

Final Fantasy XIII will take place on the floating fortress called 'Cocoon', which is controlled by the government and heavily defended. It is utopia, apparently, and those

who are cast out of Cocoon will be placed in the world below, known as 'Pulse'. The developers have also yet to reveal the names of the main characters, but one is codenamed 'Lightning': players will notice that she's a female version of Cloud from the previous Final Fantasy games. The other character from the trailers hasn't yet been revealed, but apparently, he is an ally of 'Lightning' and will come to her aid when needed.

So far, with so little information being released on this title, people are wondering how the game will be played and whether it will indeed be similar to Final Fantasy XII. What is known, however, is that Final Fantasy XIII will be a major hit when released globally. **NAG**

Justin Slabbert



GBA MOB





THE GAME HAS ARRIVED



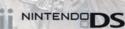




















MYTHOS

WELL, THERE'S A PLOT of sorts, we're sure, and it would almost certainly make for a wonderfully droll and fanciful introduction - but we don't actually know what it is. Instead, let us recount the legend of this game's rather curious genesis.

As the hotly-anticipated release of Hellgate: London slithers ever nearer, Flagship Studios made an unpredictable and unprecedented move. Anxious that the game's stability be tested and optimised before being released (how novel), the company decided to cobble together a smaller, more accessible game - using the same engine - to tweak and twiddle Hellgate's online component. Because, according to executive producer, Max Schaefer, "We'd rather have our servers crash in a free casual game than in our huge worldwide release of Hellgate." And lo, Mythos was born.

Therefore, as one might reasonably expect, it's a click-click-boom *Diablo*-style dungeon romper, complete with isometric perspective and comfortingly familiar interface, only with a much more light-hearted approach. Out with

the super serious "Verily for sooth shall I slay these foul fiends, o radiant Tyrael" paragons of selflessly saintly heroics, and in with gadget-geeky gremlins wearing sunglasses and smoking cigars. The graphics are cheerily bright, and cell-shaded to give them a funky, somewhat exaggerated, cartoonish feel.

Much like its brooding big brother, Mythos sports instanced adventure areas, with randomly-spawned locations, items, quests, and boss monsters. When you stumble across a new map, you can check it out to add the location to your world map, and travel there at your leisure. This is as much a cool feature as a practical one, as it will allow the developers to continually add new content to the game without upsetting the main storyline and persistent areas. We can only hope there will be a secret cow level.

As it currently stands, the game offers two confirmed playable races. We have the aforementioned punky gremlins, eminently concerned with their appearances and with an insatiable predilection for crafting zany contraptions. Then there are angst-ridden,

supercitious Elves, consumed with their own inherent tragedy and the ineffable pain of it all, while everyone else sees them as a bunch of tree-hugging, happy-go-lucky scamps. There are also two classes on offer at present: a sort of fireworks 'n' fizz bangs wizard-type called a Pyromancer; and the brutish Bloodletter, specialising in, you guessed it, spilling oodles of the shiny red stuff. Each class has several tiers of skills to unlock and unleash. Flagship, meanwhile, is promising loads more to come.

Mythos has just finished a large-scale, open Alpha stage, and scuttled on into a closed Beta. Flagship is refusing to divulge any fixed release date, but recent interviews with the company suggest that it isn't far off. And the best news yet? Hold onto your helmets, everyone: this game will be free! While there will probably be some sort of premium content introduced at some point, anyone will be able to download and play an enormous chunk of Mythos for absolutely nothing. NAG

Tarryn van der Byl





FORZA MOTORSPORT 2

Y FIRST GLIMPSE OF Forza Motorsport 2 occurred at a time when everyone was engrossed in Colin McRae: DiRT on our test Xbox 360. And it fell a little flat: its visuals seemed rather bland and ordinary compared to the superb graphics of the rally game.

However, a glance through the telemetry readouts, which can be displayed during race replays, had me intrigued. FM2 telemetry includes a full, real-time calculated Kamm grip circle on all four tyres of the player's car, among a host of other informative technical elements.

At first, especially after the arcaderacing antics in *DiRT*, the cars in *FM2* seemed to handle like absolute bricks, refusing to so much as drive around the track! It felt like the front-end was always on ice when entering the bends, but it wasn't any fault of the games. *FM2* is actually a superbly-accurate driving simulator, and with the speed that some of the cars in the game can reach (I was in a Ferrari F40 at the time), you really need to brake way, way before the corner looms to get around it on the proper racing line, using all four rubber

contact patches to their maximum potential.

Enter the bend too hot, and you'll plough straight into the kitty litter. Enter it braking too hard, and your front wheels will lock up and steering will become useless. The braking is one of those aspects of a sound driving physics model that can be the trickiest to get control of as a player, but once you've trained a good degree of sensitivity into the digit operating the analogue triggers of the Xbox console, you can really start enjoying FM2 to the full.

Okay, so I suppose I could've left the ABS and/or traction and stability control systems turned on in the pre-race menu... no space for that on my own personal race track, however.

There are a lot more cars than first meet the eye as well, including, well, everything you're likely to be able to imagine going into your dream 'high-speed driving' garage. From Lancia Delta Integrales and E36 M3s, to race-prepped Porsche 911 GT3 RSR and GT2 monsters, and even 'prototype' concept cars such as the near-mythical TVR Speed 12!

Can't say I was blown away by the sounds of the cars or the overall graphics quality,



but the physics, well, were just amazing. Just like in a real car on a real road or track, you're able to drive FM2 vehicles by gauging the limits of adhesion at all four corners, and matching lateral and longitudinal forces through the use of all the controls at your disposal – brakes, throttle, wheel, weight distribution and current gear – for highly-addictive, very-realistic laps of many of the world's most famous race circuits.

Each car drives with its own unique traits, and you'll soon be power sliding an F430 effortlessly out of tight bends, kissing the rumble-strips on the perfect exit line before blasting towards your next corner at full chat. It's an extremely technical game, and lowering the difficulty level, by enabling electronic aids, doesn't exactly help it shine, and replaces the detailed 'feel' of that excellent physics model with a rather leaden, lifeless-feeling digital helm seemingly barely connected to the car beneath you.

Turn them off though, and FM2 looks set to blow you away – just give it a bit of patience. **NAG**

Russell Bennett



PC PS2

PS3 PSP

XBOX

DS Wii

GBA MOB

053 [

PC

PS2

PS3

PSP

XBOX

DS

Wii

GBA

MOB



BEAUTIFUL KATAMARI

Developer→ Namco Bandai | Publisher→ Namco Bandai | Genre→ Puzzle | Release→ TBA

EVEN THE MOST HARDENED gamer heart melts in the face of the sheer innocent fun of Katamari Damacy and the 'sequels', We Love Katamari and Me & My Katamari. Fans of the series will be pleased to know that Beautiful Katamari is set to continue the Royal Rainbow of joy on next-gen consoles. If you've never played one of the Katamari titles before, then this would be as good a place as any to start.

For the Xbox 360 and PS3 (no Wii version yet, although Namco is aiming to have one for it), Beautiful Katamari retains the colourful look of the series, but has gained a substantial increase in the power

driving it. The added horsepower brings perfect fluidity and even more on-screen items to roll up. Beautiful Katamari increases the amount of objects you can roll up by a staggering 3,500, making the total you can stick to your ball a massive five thousand (more than double). Bet the King won't be disappointed with that Best of all, the loading screens between Katamari growth have completely disappeared. Draw distance has been vastly improved, and for the first time Katamari will let you go online with a new versus mode against up to three friends.

The control scheme appears to remain untouched: you roll your Katamari using both analogue sticks as if it were a tank, and the left and right sticks control left or right treads. To turn around, you can click both sticks or pull down on one and push up on the other. No word yet on any new game-modes or additional features, but at least everyone will be able to keep rollin' with the Prince as he collects people, pets, plants and objects in a giant ball before shooting it off into the sky to become a star. NAG

Miktar "ROYAL RAINBOW" Dracon



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2: MASK OF THE BETRAYER

Developer→ Obsidian Entertainment | Publisher→ Atari | Genre→ RPG | Release→ TBA

DIDN'T GET YOUR FILL of gloomy, subterranean slammers and bloated, fire-breathing lizards last year? Well, huzzah! Obsidian will be hurling a sixth-level Aganazzar's Scorcher of virtual D20s, pointy ears, shiny baubles, and Stuff+5 your way later this year

Following your epic rumble with the King of Shadows in the original campaign, you find yourself waking up alone and stranded in a desolate underworld haunted by the wretched dead. Undaunted, you pick yourself up, clobber some ghouls, and venture out into the bleak snowscapes of Rashemen - a magocratic gynarchy (that's posh for 'land ruled by hags') in the Unapproachable East of

Faerûn, and centre stage for the expansion campaign - in search of XP. Oh, and something to do with your True Destiny

In addition to the inevitable deluge of new feats, spells, races, base and prestige classes, henchies, weapons, armour, and monsters, Obsidian is hinting at some intriguing new gameplay enhancements. While we can only hold claws that something will be done about the engine's decidedly underwhelming visuals, we do know that the companion influence and item enchantment systems have been significantly overhauled, while the passage of time will reportedly become an important factor. Whether or not this implies a persistent world is anyone's Lore roll, but this would

certainly be a most welcome improvement. There was something patently peculiar about returning to West Harbour months after the Githyanki invasion, only to find everyone still standing around, picking their scabs, and whimpering feebly about an assault that had apparently ended only days earlier.

According to Feargus Urguhart, Obsidian Entertainment CEO, the new campaign will "focus on combat, exploration and classic D&D dungeon-crawling." We're really just hoping to bump into Minsc and his miniature giant space hamster somewhere in Ashenwood. Go for the eyes, Boo! GO FOR

Tarryn "Going for the Eyes" van der Byl

DS Wii

PS2

PS3

XBOX

360

GBA

MOB







LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

Developer→ CapCom | Publisher→ CapCom | Genre→ Action | Release→ TBA

IN A TIME WHEN colonisation of other planets is possible, humans have arrived on the frozen tundra that is the planet EDN III.

Unfortunately, they are not the first to arrive, and are greeted by enemy humans, called Snow Pirates, and a vast variety of indigenous and hostile, giant, bug-like creatures, known as the Akrid. Luckily, the Akrids' bodies, as well as the Snow Pirates' camps, hold thermal power that happens to be necessary for the humans' survival.

Playing as Wayne (a human who, strangely

enough, has bionic arms and whose only memory is that of his father's death by an Akrid), you are armed with a robotic Vital Suit, which is equipped with a number of firearms. Within eleven single-player campaigns, and through many impressive boss battles, which cover extensive world maps, Wayne must learn his true history and figure out who is behind a cunning scheme to kill all of the Akrid and Snow Pirates.

The game's plot and gameplay mechanics haven't changed much in its quick port from

the Xbox 360 to the PC, but being one of the first games to utilise DirectX 10 and support Shader Model 3.0, it can still be played using DirectX 9. The visuals of *Lost Planet* have been refined, with the snowy environment reacting as close to reality as possible, and should be stunning.

Lost Planet also features up to 16 players in online play, which will create impressive dynamics within all the multiplayer options. No co-op mode will be available, however. NAG

Megan Hughes







MANHUNT 2

Developer→ Rockstar London | Publisher→ Rockstar Games | Genre→ Action/Stealth | Release→ July 2007

ARGE SWATHS OF HUMANITY remain undeniably fascinated with the macabre. Movies such as Saw, Hostel, Marathon Man, Jacob's Ladder, 8MM and Romper Stomper prove beyond doubt that there are enough people willing to pay good money to see people die in make-believe. Manhunt, by Rockstar Games, took its inspiration and ideas from such films and even Reality TV, but explored the genre via extension to its ultimate end: a world were people paid money to view snuff films. The player, forced by the disconcerting

character known only as The Director, had to kill to survive and often such killings resulted in grotesque (yet oddly satisfying) situations. Manhunt remains an original and fresh game with plenty of innovation atop the solid stealth genre it inhabits, and is clearly a game developed for adults. Rockstar, being Rockstar, didn't let a few accusations of creating a 'murder simulator' get in the way of its expression and is now ready to release Manhunt 2. 'With Manhunt 2, we have tried to create a game that stays close to the original

concept of chilling suspense and stealth, whilst pushing the game design and storytelling forward," said Sam Houser, Founder and Executive producer of Rockstar Games. It's not clear if *Manhunt 2* is a prequel or sequel, but it follows a new protagonist (with some new moves and tools) as he escapes from wrongful imprisonment in an asylum. Once again, stealth-kills come in three shades of violence and will ensure that the game wears the 18+badge of 'I'm-for-adults-only'. NAG

Miktar "Leo Kasper" Dracon

PS3 PSP

PS2

XB0X 360

DS

Wii

MOB



PS3 PSP

XB0X 360

DS

Wii GBA

MOB









WHAT WE'RE PLAYING

BLACKSITE: AREA 51 [360]

At the time of writing, the demo for this FPS hit LIVE, and despite appearing a bit rough around the edges (some framerate issues), it looks just as delicious as *Resistance: Fall of Man*, but with a much darker, grittier *Gears of War* style. The aliens are certainly intricate and detailed, just like your controllable teammates. If you grab the demo, keep an eye out of the rather impressive lightning and thunder.

CRACKDOWN [360]

The new Downloadable Content (DLC) for Crackdown just hit LIVE, and the free "Keys to the City" pack was enough to get us running, jumping and dispensing justice around the city again. The free pack adds a Keys to the City mode where you can literally cheat (leader boards and Achievements are switched off), make your character über and then spawn tons of explosive barrels all over the place until you've made a nice pile of boom. The pay-for DLC adds in new weapons, game types and even vehicles.

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY [PS2]

Ah Lara, it's so good to have you back. Anniversary truly is the best Tomb Raider ever developed, because it captures the spirit of the first game and gracefully incorporates it into the new technology and vision that Legends presented. We are happy to see the grid, tank-tread Lara and wobbly texture mapping go, replaced by crisp visuals, stunning set-pieces and a completely agreeable set of tomb raiding breasts.

COMMAND & CONQUER 3 [PC]

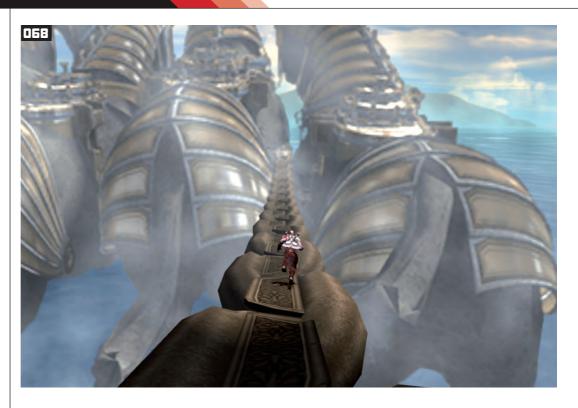
Alex just won't stop putting on his Kane cape whenever he plays C&C3. He says it's something about "truly being a part of the ethos and multi-simplicity of Nod," which we think he just made up on the spot. The new 1.05 patch is almost upon us with its set of balance changes, unit adjustments and new maps. We think the additional 75% range to GDI Rocket Troopers is just plain awesome.

F.E.A.R.: EXTRACTION POINT [PC]

Our F.E.A.R. go-to guy tells us that Extraction Point is creepy and much, much harder than F.E.A.R. ever was. He mentioned that despite being developed by a different team, it manages to retain the look and feel that made the original such a classic. In fact, it may even be a little creepier (in an appropriate way) than the original ever managed to pull off.

DJ MAX PORTABLE 2 [PSP]

We snagged this beatmania clone from the Intertubes and quickly realised that the one-level demo was forged in the fires of Mount Doom and exists only to batter down our already weak gamer egos. No man, woman or child should ever be within ten metres of somebody playing DJ Max Portable 2, because they may find themselves the proud owner of a second-hand PSP flung into their brain casing.











WEB SCORES









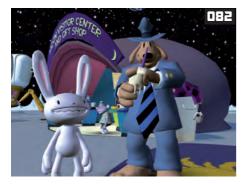


THE GAMING GENERALS

When the world is in danger, there is only one group of super-powered Generals to call: The Nine Gaming Generals! Each comes with their own special ability and matching transforming robot animal.









Tarryn van der Byl

dictionaries handy.



Eddie Francis

without laughing at you too hard.



Adam Liebman

066



Ryan Kalis



Justin Slabbert

In charge of diapers



Toby Hudon



TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY



NAG	92
METACRITIC	N/A
GAMERANKINGS	80

INFERNAL



NAG	75
METACRITIC	64
GAMERANKINGS	63

SAM & MAX EPISODE 6



NAG	80
METACRITIC	81
GAMERANKINGS	82

Miktar Dracon

Minister of Magical



James Francis

General James



MMMMMM ... SKINY!

A quick quide to the NAG reviews section

PC SPEC: Will this game rape your machine, or make it fly? Check the hox at the hottom right for an explanation on our fancy hardware rating svstem.

BETTER THAN/WORSE THAN:

Everything is relative, right? Because of that, we keep making comparisons between games in this space, and try to be funny about it. SCORE: You only care about this number, we know that But try to pretend you read the reviews because they're so insightful and informative. Thank you, we love you.

VITAL INFO: A game can't survive without these vitals, so you should probably pay attention to them



PLATFORMS: The brightest block is the platform on which the game was reviewed. Dimmer blocks are platforms on which the game also appears. Simple.

AWARDS: You won't find these NAG awards, given to games of merit, anywhere but in NAG. Truth

GAME NAME: This is the important bit, and you might want to write it down somewhere just in case you need it later

BOTTOM LINE: It all comes down to this, and the words written here will shape the future, moulding it towards gaming excellence

ICONS: Check the list on the right for our frikkin' sweet icons, distilling the essence of games even further, just for you.

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THE REVIEW ICONS

The NAG review icons aim to help you get a better idea of what a game is like, while giving us less work to do in the review. Everyone wins, so best memorise this list below and look out for them in the Review score box.



ACTION: When you gotta blast, smash, crash and mash your way to



BABYSITTING: Put the kids to bed, you gotta Babysit this game to



BITCHIN': When a game just plain rocks despite everything, then it is worthy of the Bitchin



BORING: Grab your blankie and teddy, we might be in for some Boring



BUGGY: Truth be told, there is just no excusing a Buggy game because games aren't cheap.



CASH-IN/LICENSE: Some companies totally Cash-in on License



CINEMATIC: Sweet-ass cutscenes, dramatic camerawork and awesome scenes are Cinematic.



CLONE: We've seen it before and we'll see it again, because people always Clone good stuff



COMPETITIVE: You don't think Ranked Match is a feature; you think it



 $\textbf{FOREIGN:} \ \mathsf{No} \ \mathsf{clue} \ \mathsf{what} \ \mathsf{the} \ \mathsf{game} \ \mathsf{is} \ \mathsf{about} \ \mathsf{or} \ \mathsf{even} \ \mathsf{what} \ \mathsf{is} \ \mathsf{said}?$ Confusing plot? Careful, it might be Foreign!



ONLINE: For games that play well with others and generally mean playing with others. Online.



PARTY: Get some friends and move the couch, Party games are



PIECE OF POO: Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just can't



STUPID PEOPLE: Don't worry little buddy, this game holds your hand like a friend



ALL AGES: These games contain no violence, immoral acts or anything that might narrow the demographic, but they may still be difficult.



KID FRIENDLY: Kids can play this game without needing an adult every five minutes to explain to them what button to press.



16+ RESTRICTION: If you're 16 or over, you are well within your rights



18+ RESTRICTION: If you are not yet 18, please put down this game and back away slowly before the police come and arrest you.



MULTIPLAYER: The number on the contoller icon indicates the maximum number of people who can play at at the same time.

WILL IT RUN? - PC GAME SPECS

PC game specs are a pain for us, because we need to list them for those people who don't consult the box before buying a game. Instead, the reviews will now have a nice number ranking on the side. Higher numbers mean a game is more machine intensive. If a game has all the numbers lit up, it'll run on a 5-year-old piece of junk up to the most bad-ass of machines.

- ${\bf 5} \quad \hbox{Your machine has a DirectX 10 graphics card, a dual-core or higher CPU}$ honour your investment. [DX10 graphics card; dual-core CPU; 2GB+ RAM]
- 4 Your graphics card has a respectable 256MB of memory and your CPU sits at the higher end of 2GHz, backed by 1-2GB of RAM. A worthy rig for worthy game. [256MB graphics card with DX9; 2GHz or more; 1-2GB RAM]
- support, while your 2GB Pentium 4 churns happily with between 512MBand 1GB of RAM. We assume you're slowly saving for an upgrade [256MB+ graphics card with DX8; 2GHz Pentium 4; 512MB-1GB RAM]
- ${\bf 2}\quad \hbox{Okay, so you have a graphics card that falls below the 128MB memory}$ point but supports DX8, a chip that you can't call 2GHz even if you wanted action than you'd like to admit. [128MB or lower graphics card with DX8; Below 2GHz chip; 256MB or lower RAM]
- upgrade money is spent on something more practical, like a coffee maker games. [Can run XP, will play game]

ASUS EN8600GTS for

10°C Colder

S.T.A.L.K.E.R: Shadows of Chernobyl - Full Enjoyment at Cooler Temperature

ASUS's new high-end graphics card - the EN8600GTS/HTDP/256M, has been chosen as the official graphics card to be globally released and bundled with this much anticipated game. Equipped with 256MB of DDR3 memory, support for NVIDIA's SLI™ technology and a unique cooling fansink, the EN8600GTS is designed with the gamer's graphical expectations in mind.

Unparalleled GPU Performance for Realistic Gameplay

Taking advantage of Nvidia's newly released GeForce 8600 GTS Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), the ASUS EN8600GTS utilizes NVIDIA's unified architecture with GigaThreadTM technology to deliver the finest graphics and visual special effects. With full support for NVIDIA SLITM technology and Microsoft's DirectX 10 and Shader Model 4.0, this graphics card will utilize the graphical enhancements from Microsoft[®] Windows VistaTM to enable stunning and complex special effects. The ASUS EN8600GTS will also feature true 128-bit floating point high dynamic-range (HDR) lighting and NVIDIA[®] Quantum EffectsTM technology - allowing users to experience the best parts of the gritty and atmospheric portions of any game.



ASUS's G1 Notebook makes an In-Game Appearance.

Exclusive ASUS Features to Enhance Visual Experience

The ASUS EN8600GTS is fully HDCP compliant - allowing users enjoy crystal-clear and sharp details with playback from HD DVDs, Blu-Ray Discs and other protected content at full High Definition resolutions. Furthermore, this graphics card comes with a variety of input and output

solutions to fit any video/home entertainment situation. With TV-Out, HDTV-Out, Dual DVI-I (supports two 3840 x 2400 at 30Hz resolution displays) and VGA outputs, the ASUS EN8600GTS makes it easy to connect to other digital devices for more entertainment options.

By combining innovative and state-of-the-art technology with exclusive and useful applications, the ASUS EN8600GTS is able to deliver superb graphics for immersive and realistic gameplay; and support a host of visual solutions for great entertainment options. Packed with so many features, the ASUS EN8600GTS is truly a powerful and versatile graphics card to suit your visual needs.

Innovative Fansink Design for Effective Cooling

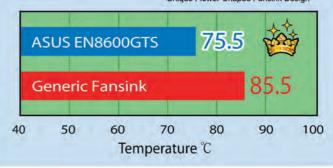
The unique flower-shaped fansink design is able to cool more effectively due to several innovative technologies.

Firstly, the design encompasses a bigger radiator than other generic cooling solutions - allowing more heat to be transferred from the board to the cooling fins faster; improving heat dissipation. In conjunction with this, a larger sized fan (70mm diameter) helps bring more heat away from the board more effectively. Because of

this unique and effective design, the fan cools efficiently and decreases the GPU temperature by up to 10°C.



Inique Flower-Shaped Fansink Design









COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

THE MORE I PLAY racing games, the more I wish they were all developed by Codemasters. Colin McRae: DiRT greets you with a stunning intro video that gets your heart pumping. Why? There's a Smart car 'rally' car in it. DiRT only has one downside: long load times. However, it's worth it. You get to race in the most beautiful racing game I have ever seen. The level of detail is amazing: from the cars coming apart to the engines shaking at the start of a race.

The scenery that you drive through and mostly into is seamlessly delivered, apart from some pop-ups here and there. It's still the safest way of seeing what a mild-mannered English tree does to a 'Scubie' at 180km/h. As the name implies, DiRT is not just a rally game, but rather a game that includes any four-wheeled beast that dare to tread on dirt. You have all the famous rally cars and the fun Dakar cars. There are trucks and buggies, rear-wheel, front-wheel, all-wheel and, often, no-wheel drive. Though it doesn't boast Gran Turismo's selection, there are more than enough sponsor decals (liveries) to choose from. Each car handles accordingly, and

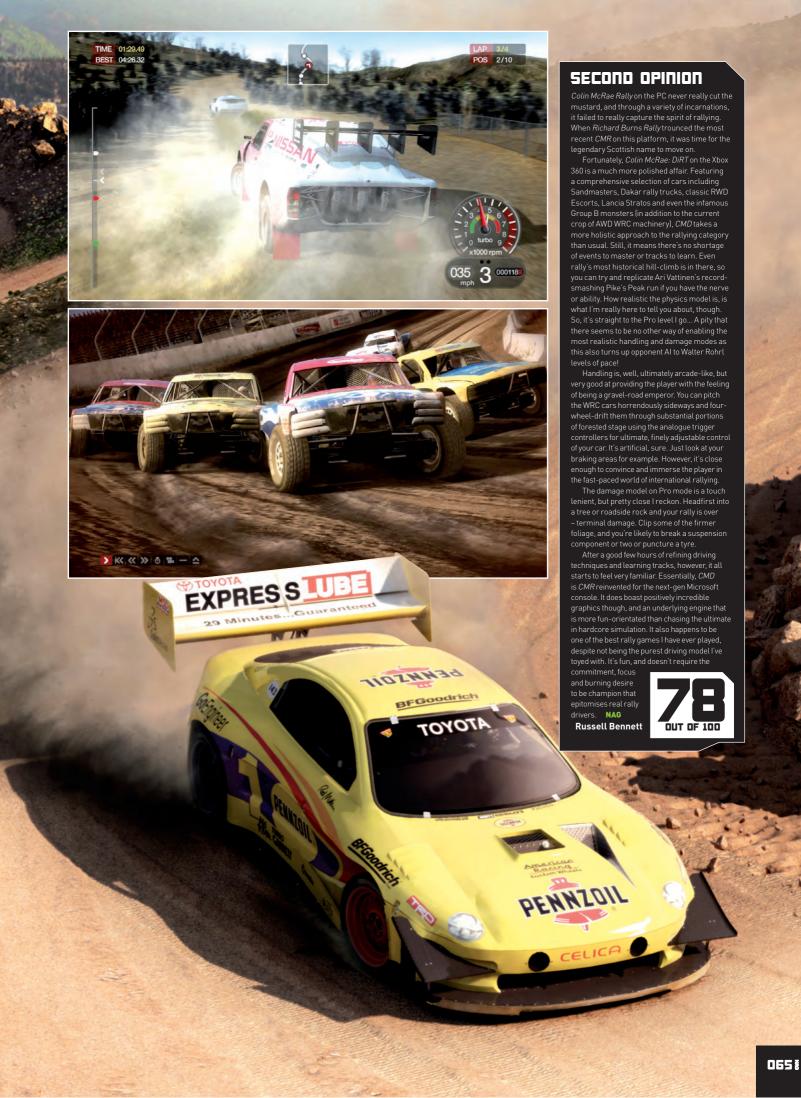
with the four distinctly different difficulty settings, anyone should be able to get the hang of doing hill-climbs in a truck or that screaming 240km/h Toyota. Apart from the Career mode, which resembles ToCA3's, you can also create custom races and leagues. All the ways of testing your talent are on offer: from time trails with a navigator, to track races with opponents.

Sadly, these aren't multiplayer supported. Your friends will be able to challenge you in timed races and even send immediate challenges as you finish in record time. However, their cars won't be in the race, so no bumping. DiRT's sound bothers me, though. All the sounds are there (even ones you didn't think you needed), and you can hear the navigator perfectly. However, there is no in-game music. I only noticed this when I wasn't playing. So, if you'd like some music, stream it yourself. While the game loads, it shows you your stats, highest jump, most rolls, etc., so you can hide bad driving behind silly stories. Go buy DiRT. Go enjoy DiRT. As washing powder has taught us, dirt is good. NAG

Eddie Francis

















GBA









It's the most amazed croc we have ever seen

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

ERE WE GO AGAIN. Okay, quick recap: *Tomb Raider*, launched in the late nineties, became a gaming icon because it (a) was a technical breakthrough for platforming titles and 3D graphics, and (b) featured a really hot female character named Lara Croft. Lara's star started to rise while Tomb Raider's quality began to slide. For five games and nearly a decade fans had to see things go from bad to worse. Fidos said that it was probably because Core was tired of the franchise. In reality, it was because there was too much focus on Lara and not enough on what made the game great. Finally, things swung back with Crystal Dynamics' Legend, which introduced a new engine and team to the series.

Legend was great and the collective sigh of relief from fans everywhere showed that it was what Tomb Raider needed. However, Legend only plugged the hole. It was time to get the ship moving again. That job belongs to Anniversary: a revision of the original Tomb Raider game. Yes, it's not a simple remake. The PS2 is capable of achieving far larger levels and more complex puzzles than the first PlayStation could ever handle. In fact, Anniversary shows you how far we've come in ten years. The first game appeared in the PSone's early years and the remake in the PS2's senior phase.

All four of the areas – Peru, Greece, Egypt and Atlantis - are back; complete with some classic puzzles, but not exactly how you'd remember them. The fans asked for tombs. Well, after Anniversary,

you'll be asking for some nice vistas. Halfway into Greece and you really start appreciating the effort these ancients went into keeping people out. Seriously, what were they? Space Monkeys? Large rooms connected to large rooms, every other one with a puzzle or tricky bit of navigating. The giddiest I've ever felt in a game like this was Sands of Time, where you jumped from crazy heights with perfect timing. It's all in your head, of course. If the character is supposed to make the ledge, it will - unless, of course, you jump too early or late. Anniversary takes all of that to school, including Sands and Legend. A lot of work went into the game's design. The only people who'll argue that it's a retread are those who have never actually played Anniversary. They probably

There are some niggles with the game and you'll scream in anguish at least as many times as you did in the first game. However, soon vou'll make it look easy – until you get to the next puzzle, anyway. The new adrenaline combat system is great, because it makes quick work of enemies and leaves you free to explore the tombs. The game

didn't even play the original



also includes commentary, featuring the creative directors of both this and the first game - fans will love it. Visually, it's breathtaking. The best Tomb Raider yet? Yeah, why not? I think it's that good. NAG **James Francis** All Tomb Raider game





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PLAYSTATION 3









in one of Kratos's major encounters.







360 DS

Wii

GBA MOB

CAST God of War II has a top notch voice acting cast. Kratos is still voiced by T.C. Carson, but a few notable others have appeared in this game. The overall narration and voice of Gaia is done by Academy Award winner Linda Hunt, and Oscar-nominee Michael Clarke Duncan voices Atlas. But one of the most interesting inclusions is Harry Hamlin. Harry Hamlin played Perseus in the famous Clash of the Titans iron 1981. For our younger readers, Clash of the Titans is an often-referenced film that involved (for its time) state-of-the-art special effects including lots of stop-motion animation. In







GOD OF WAR II

PS2 OWNERS WILL BE happy to know it's not over until the fat lady sings. Or screams, has three of her arms impaled, and a giant pendulum blade shoved through her skull. And even then, it's not over. Some are calling *God of War II* the swansong of the PS2, but they said that about *God of War* last year, and somehow more juice was still wrung from the ageing yet still beloved console.

If you played the first God of War, this game will be as familiar to you as old bloodstains on a favourite T-shirt. The basic mechanic is unchanged, with the same combat system and jaw-dropping boss fights, which are more numerous and even more over-the-top in the sequel. Kratos keeps his blades from the first game, but new secondary weapons are found as you go along, as well as new magic attacks. There are also a few new items from Greek mythology that add new abilities, but the discovery here is half the fun, so we won't discuss them for fear of spoilers.

Those expecting to button-mash their way through are going to struggle. Rather than unending hordes of fodder, most encounters are one to three tough monsters, which often require specific tactics to beat. The game also has a habit of playing the "well if you can beat one, here's two!" trick. This overly emphasizes the need to adjust tactics to both attack a specific enemy type's weakness while avoiding their attacks. Even on easy mode, it may be a bit tough for casual gamers.

God of War II has quite a few hidden secrets, which unlock as you go through the game. The regular game hides bonus items that give things like infinite magic or a chance for all attacks to turn enemies to stone, or new armour sets for Kratos. These bonus content items can only be used on the difficulty you've beaten the game on. Therefore, if you've finished normal, you can replay normal with them, but not hard mode until you've finished that one as well. There's also a new 'Challenge of the Titans' mode, where you're required to defeat enemies using a specific method within a time limit, such as "kill nine monsters while in the air", etc.

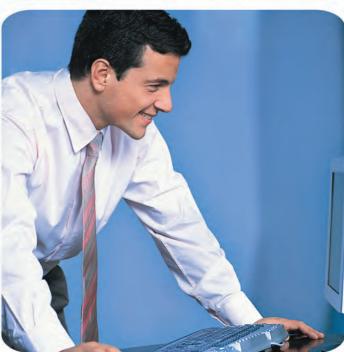
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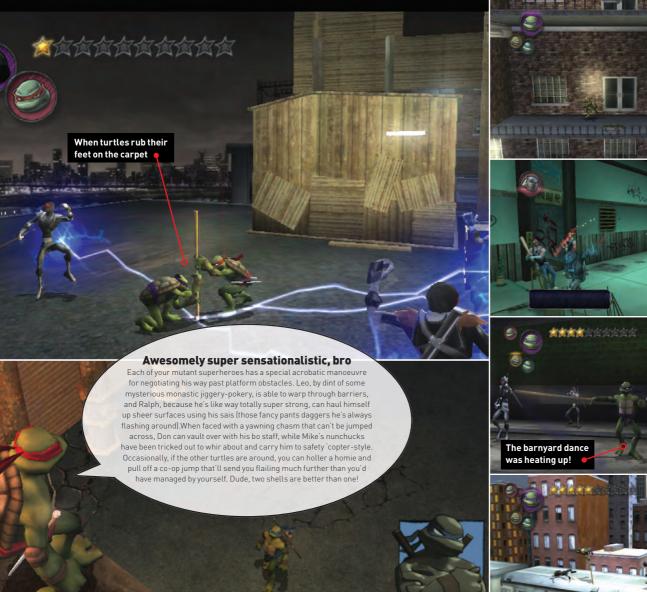
Infesting the sewers between Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project and the last few Prince of Persia titles, TMNT is a nimble 3D

platform-hopper interspersed with some brawling high jinks. Your zen reptiles will have to hoist, leap, scamper, scuttle, and roll their way through a range of rugged urban environments, and knock the stuffing out of any foolish thugs in their way.

Platforming sequences are solid enough, with an arsenal of slick moves at hand, including wall- and ledge-running, and wall-to-wall flipping, as well as some character-specific stunts. Tangling with the bad guys, however, is mostly limited to a rather disappointing two-fold (slap or kick) onslaught that swiftly degenerates into a yawnarific button mash. Later in the game, you'll be able to tag in your subaquatic brethren for some gnarly double-up assaults that do go some way to mitigate this otherwise somewhat simplistic combat.

Despite its few shortcomings, TMNT is actually really fun. The turtles themselves are just inherently cool, and the game packs enough one-inch punch to engage. NAG

Tarryn "Heroine in a Half-Shell" van der Byl





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MAELSTROM

Occasionally, a game comes along that shows great promise and unusual concepts, but is tragically flawed in some way. Such a title is *Maelstrom*, for while it boasts some minor innovations, it tends to make for an unexciting experience, at least for those of us who seek intensity in games.

The basic premise behind it is that humanity has all but blown itself to hell, and now two factions war for control: the survivalist Remnants, who are much like freedom fighters: and the Ascension, a high-tech empire of sorts, focused on accelerated evolution through technology and genetic engineering. Along comes an alien race, who sees mankind's fragmentation as a sign of exploitable weakness, and decides to invade. This sets the scene for a three-way fracas, a popular model in realtime strategy these days, as it is able to set up interesting interactions between the factions, and a certain Rock, Paper, Scissors relationship. The three factions play very differently to each other, which is a refreshing change and something rarely seen since the great and mighty StarCraft. The Remnants are the most conventional, with a Warcraft-style upgradeable central building, worker units to build structures and a generally familiar tech-tree and faction structure. This is why the Remnant campaign is presented first. Unfortunately, this campaign is

The Ascension is unusual in that it can only have several buildings in play at any time, but these can be packed up into a type of vehicle to redeploy elsewhere. Also, the Vanguard vehicle can be upgraded to a later model, allowing it to transform into a more

sophisticated building. Defensive structures are handled similarly: all Ascension units can transform into a different form, the less sophisticated ones turning into turrets of sorts. The alien race is vastly different. It is organic in nature, and its units are hatched from eggs (a la Zerg, only there are different grades of eggs for different unit types, and a bewildering selection of unit types). The aliens like water, and are healed in it, so some of the aliens' technology allow them to 'aquaform' the terrain - flood the map, essentially. The aliens receive the requisite eggs for hatching from orbit, landing near their production structures. The aliens' techtree is also radically different from those of the human factions

The game uses varying resources for the different factions, and each faction acquires them in different ways. All of the above would suggest to me that this is an excellent game that I would thoroughly enjoy. However, as mentioned above, it is sadly flawed. The main problem lies in the campaign, which is mind blistering dull to the point of being downright soporific. The pace is exceptionally slow, largely because one resource, water, comes in very slowly, and almost everything depends on it. Furthermore, while the graphics are generally quite advanced, they suffer from being dated in some respects (for example, characters wave their appendages totally randomly while in conversation). The interface is a bit tricky - not different or difficult as such, just finicky.

The skirmish and multiplayer modes are considerably better, and the action is generally faster. Ideally, if you try this game, understand that you will be looking at a title that introduces novel, if not revolutionary concepts, but the execution is not perfect. Ideally, you want to try it out multiplayer – it has considerable potential in that respect. NAG

Alex Jelagin







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TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07

EASPORTS' SUCCESSFUL GOLFING franchise, Tiger Woods PGA Tour, makes its PlayStation 3 debut with its 2007 iteration, and despite one or two shortcomings, it's a successful outing. Of course, nothing comes without a price, and buyers should be aware at the outset that although the next-generation incarnations of PGA Tour 07 do boast some much-improved visuals over their PS2 counterpart, the roster of available golfers and courses has been reduced.

Despite featuring only 15 professional golfers and 12 courses, instead of the PS2's 21, this version of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* is certainly not lacking in substance. Featured among the roster of playable professionals are the likes of Retief Goosen, Vijay Singh, John Daly, Colin Montgomerie, Annika Sorenstam and, of course, Woods himself. The available courses represent some of the best known in the world, with St Andrews, Pebble Beach, Carnoustie and Bandon Dunes among them.

The game offers a number of different play modes and mini games, but the meat of it is found in the Career Mode, where you control either a rookie version of Tiger Woods or your own created golfer, and attempt to rise up the ranks of the golfing world. You'll need to improve your golfer's abilities with a variety of mini games at the training course, whilst working your way through either a PGA Tour season or a series of match-play encounters

with both professional and off-the-wall fictitious golfers, until you can at last face off against Tiger Woods himself. The twist is that there is a limit to how far you can improve your skills through the training games: once you've hit that limit, you'll need to win some actual events to further increase your cap. It's a good way of forcing you to pace yourself while progressing through the game, and does a good job of keeping the game varied.

In terms of the controls, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07 functions extremely well with the SIXAXIS controller, despite the limited implementation of the controller's motionsensing capabilities. Overall, once you've given yourself enough time to become accustomed to the control scheme, you'll be placing your shots with ease. Inconsistencies crop up occasionally throughout the course of the game, such as the variable effect that wind has on your shots (despite the inclusion of an onscreen wind indicator). However, for the most part, the game dynamic remains challenging and enjoyable, and true to the game of golf, occasionally frustrating. The visuals are mostly impressive, though the golfers have a 'cardboard cut-out' feel to them, which diminishes the realism of the title.

Overall, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07* is a solid, enjoyable and often impressive title that portends only good things for the franchise's next-generation career. **NAG**

Adam Liebman



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SEGA'S VIRTUA FIGHTER SERIES has long been regarded as one of, if not the, most finely-honed and precision-crafted fighting franchises in existence, despite often proving less popular than the likes of *Tekken*, *Soul Calibur* or *Dead or Alive*. The series' latest instalment, being one of the PlayStation 3 launch titles, is in an excellent position to win over new fans, and anyone who gives the game a fair chance will find that it does everything right, and then some.

Virtua Fighter has a reputation as being a very technical, 'hardcore' experience, and one that requires much patience and persistence to enjoy. It's true that the series has always offered a lot of depth, with many complexities and nuances that require plenty of time to master, and this remains true with Virtua Fighter 5. However, one doesn't need to be a devotee of the franchise to enjoy this title: it's accessible even to newcomers, and the diversity of characters, all of whom are very well balanced, means that the game is a treat to play, so long as you're competing against an opponent of equal skill to your own.

The differences in play dynamic between the latest title and the PS2's Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution are subtle at best, with the returning characters having undergone a very slight reworking of their move lists and controls. Two new characters have been added: El Blaze is a Mexican luchador-style

wrestler, while Eileen practices Kou-ken, a form of monkey-themed Kung Fu. The rest of the roster remains unchanged from the previous instalment.

The game modes are also largely unchanged, with the typical Arcade and Versus modes being offered - there is no online play option available. The bulk of the game, though, is found in the Quest mode, quite similar to that found in Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution. This mode allows you to select a character, name him or her, and play in a number of different virtual arcades, competing against opponents of varying skill levels. As you climb through the ranks, you'll win a number of items, as well as gold, which can be used to customise any of your character's four available costumes (adding a rewarding element of personalisation to the game).

Visually, Virtua Fighter 5 is nothing short of breathtaking. The game supports HDTV output up to 1080p, but even on a standard-definition television the graphics are stunning. Beautiful arenas, with exquisite background animation, water and lighting effects, and superbly detailed characters make this game as much of a joy to watch as it is to play. Virtua Fighter 5 is, ultimately, a challenging but accessible, highly-entertaining fighting game, and a very respectable addition to the initial stable of PS3 titles. NAG

Adam Liebman





DS Wii

GBA

MOB













INFERNAL

STHE BATTLE RAGES on between good Aand evil, a fallen angel by the name of Ryan Lennox is caught up in the middle of it. As Ryan Lennox, it's your job to guide him through various missions and locations to ultimately bring about a balance between good and evil. As a fallen angel, Ryan is on the run from Etherlight, a secret agency within the angelic ranks, who are trying to kill him. However, this is all made better when the Devil himself arrives to make a deal that would ultimately change Ryan's future with both sides. Once accepted, Ryan is imbued with demonic powers (a la Charmed).

Despite the good storyline, the game does have quite a few drawbacks. For instance, where the gameplay is concerned, Infernal feels like it's five years old. However, it has extremely good graphics, but the graphics slow the game down tremendously - especially in some of the more powerful missions. Infernal is also a very linear game in terms of levels: while a player can do certain things with certain objects, other objects that are the same cannot be used. For example, you could blow up one wall but not another identical, flimsier-looking wall. The enemies are also a bit outdated in terms of

their AI, with them seeing you and shooting in your direction constantly, unlike what you would expect from a game of this magnitude. Although these facts affect the overall gameplay, the storyline is quite good in some sections, with some good twists to be found.

What makes the game similar to Charmed (the TV series) is that, as Ryan, players will get to use powers such as teleportation, telekinesis and many more. The only problem with these powers is that, due to poor game design, they can only be used at certain times during the game (this makes it extremely frustrating when the player considers what else he or she could actually use these powers for in the game other than just reaching the objectives).

The gameplay is similar to Resident Evil 4, with the player taking a third-person, shouldertop camera position. The game also features a few similar weapons as Resident Evil 4.

In the end though, Infernal is just another shooter that will get lost in the endless sea of shooters we are seeing now - most of which are far superior to Infernal. It's an average game that might excite a few, but leaves the rest of us feeling frustrated beyond measure. NAG

Justin Slabbert





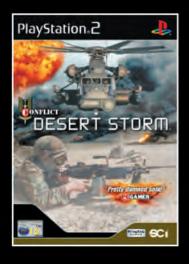
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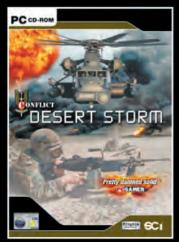


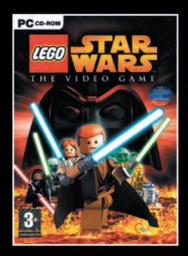




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LEFT BEHIND: ETERNAL FORCES

HAVING WATCHED AND ENJOYED the movies and books, from a gaming perspective, Left Behind is rather disappointing. The game starts after the second coming of Christ (The Rapture), which sees a world where all Christians have disappeared and ascended to heaven. Those remaining are the 'Left Behind', who have since become believers and formed the Tribulation forces. It's set in New York and is a realtime strategy adventure with the usual good versus evil plot, but is based on prophecies in the Bible.

The Tribulation forces' goal is to try and stop the Global Community Peace Keepers, who are after world domination. Being a Christian game, you don't, as in may other games, set out to kill the 'enemy', but rather to convert them into believers and recruit them into various careers to further your cause. As you move around the game, you must try to avoid the enemy, but in life or death situations, you'll have to fight back. However, for those so inclined, you can resort to the tactic of killing them as you please with minimal penalties. You'll also need to constantly monitor and keep your converts' spirits high. If any convert's spirit level drops too low, you'll lose them to the

non-believers again. If your main character's spirit level is too low, the game will end. After recruiting believers, you'll have to send them to various training camps and put them to work in various careers, such as renovating abandoned buildings, building new ones, setting up food markets, banks, etc. As a Christian game, it's surprising that in multiplayer mode you are able to sign on to the side of the antichrist.

Although the sound effects are pretty good, the graphics are hugely disappointing - especially in light of the other new generation games currently being released. Buildings and characters are repetitive and backgrounds often have no texture. The street scenes are more interesting and have more detail, such as steam rising from grids in the streets, shadows of buildings and plenty of billboards (which the developers have cleverly used for advertising). There are also some bugs that quite often result in having to restart the game.

As a Christian, I had been optimistic about this game, but have been disappointed. As this is their first release, we can only hope that the developers will set out to improve on their weaknesses in future releases. NAG

Justin Slabbert



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WAR FRONT: TURNING POINT

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WELCOME BACK TO THE tired and overused World War II setting. Presumably in an effort to escape that particular perception, the developers have put a different spin on the theme: history was subtly altered, and a few fantastical technologies are available to players. In addition, this departure from historical fact has allowed the developers to create an original timeline. For example, the Allied campaign starts with a Germanoccupied London, and the player is tasked with the mission of liberating the city, almost three years after its capture by the enemy.

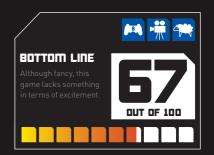
Despite its overused and contrived basic premise, the game does have a certain charm. For starters, it quickly becomes clear that the game actually has a story. This is fairly unusual in the real-time strategy genre,

and always impresses me when the case. The characters are entertainingly contentious and argumentative, often bantering among themselves. The story also presents an alternative past that is similar to history, but with a few changes that spice it up: for example, the Americans have helicopters, while the Germans have jetpacks. Also present are shield generators and cryogenic weapons.

The graphics are detailed and of a high quality, though very reminiscent of any of a number of World War II-based games. The 3D engine is fairly flexible, allowing a great degree of freedom, though not allowing quite enough tilting of the camera. The camera can be set to a chase mode and turrets can be commandeered in first-person mode.

Sound effects are what you might expect, and neither wow nor disappoint. Hero units are at the player's disposal and earn experience, leading to the acquisition of new skills.

Alex "R.A.V.E.N." Jelagin





SAM & MAX: BRIGHT SIDE OF THE MOON

RRP-> \$8.99 | Publisher-> Telltale Games | Distributor-> www.telltalegames.com | Genre-> Adventure | PC Spec-> 1 2 3 4 5

SEASON 1 OF Sam & Max's adventures is finally coming to its conclusion. With this, Telltale kept its promise of six games within six months, though it technically was seven. But who is counting? During these months, the duo took us through five mini adventures, all tied together by some hypnosis scam. This final episode takes them to the Moon, using the Desoto, to confront the final boss, but not after doing a few things with a few familiar friends. Because this is the finale, many of the previous characters return. Nevertheless, it's all still really clever while still managing to tie up the plots. The fifth episode still marks the highpoint of the season, but *Bright Side of*

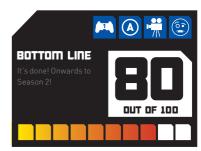
the Moon is not far behind it. It all shows that Telltale has listened, reacted and adapted. Bright Side of the Moon also concludes the first true episodic game series - and quite successfully. Granted, the end is a bit weak, but it's always sad to see the end of an adventure game you were really enjoying. Some of the puzzles are pretty tough, and design decisions with some of the recycled game areas caused some frustration. Nevertheless, overall it's a proper and exciting finale for this season.

The biggest benefit for you, though, is that all six episodes are now available and will also hit shelves in boxed copies soon. That totals around fifteen hours of Sam &

Max. Now, of course, it's waiting for Season 2 and seeing what else Telltale gets up to.

Maybe continue Bone? NAG

James Francis





Using innovative technology, the ASUS ScreenDUO is able to keep track of important information even when the computer is switched off. Supporting Windows Vista SideShow, it provides a secondary display that can showcase often-accessed functions and information like RSS news feeds, meeting schedules, emails and synchronized alerts from the PC or websites. This convenient and handy screen allows users to save both time and resources.

Keeps You Up to Date

Another innovative feature of the ScreenDUO is the ability to show daily information like news and email on the ScreenDUO without interrupting movie viewing or game playing. With instant updating when the PC is connected to the Internet, users will be able to always have the latest updates in life.



Showcase Your Digital Photos

With a 320x240 pixels resolution, the ScreenDUO is able to double up as a digital photo frame. The 262K colors display allows users to showcase rich and colorful images in a slideshow format whether the

PC is switched on or off. When the PC is powered off, the ScreenDUO can display up to sixty frames of photos stored in its memory.

Enjoy Quick Booting and Resuming with ASUS AP Trigger

Additionally, users will enjoy the convenience and swiftness of quick booting or resuming media and favorite pre-defined applications. With ASUS's AP Trigger, with just one touch of the button on the ScreenDUO, the PC will start up and play the music file or resume working on something that was just worked on a few hours ago.



Always Be Reminded of Important Events

The ScreenDUO has a calendar gadget function so that users can also utilize it as a reminder for important events in daily use. Key appointments, alerts and schedules in a user's daily life can be organized and tracked from the ScreenDUO.

Indeed, as we can see, the ASUS ScreenDUO is well equipped to help users utilize the features of Windows Vista SideShow to keep them updated; and provides useful features to enhance their day-to-day computer usage.

PC



ASPHALT: URBAN GT 2

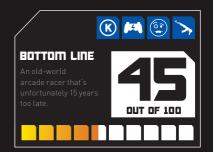
RRP→ R449 | Publisher→ Ubisoft | Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Racing

NOPE, WE HAVEN'T HEARD of Asphalt 1 either. Somewhere between Need for Speed and Burnout, with a few sprigs from older Grand Theft Auto titles tossed into the pot, the Asphalt games roll out a bunch of licensed, supercharged road hogs on a range of urban tracks for some hi-octane outrun carnage [a pun!]. The circuits are liberally strewn with nitro and cash pickups, while players can also rack up bonuses for reckless driving, trashing the scenery, wiping out opponents, and ramping off big jumps. Too much devilmay-care freewheeling about will land the cops on your tail and you'll have to shake off squad cars and a helicopter with a frickin' laser beam attached to its head. Sounds rad.

Well, it's only just barely okay. The visuals bear sad testament to the developers clearly never having heard of this wonderful new-fangled wizardry called antialiasing. Moreover, while the vehicles have a fair few customising options, most of them are flagrantly nobbled from other titles. The soundtrack is limited to a short loop of bland electro and Maximo Park's Apply Some Pressure. However, the worst thing about this game is that it's shamefully easy. Three hours in, and your dutiful reviewer had lost only a single race – and that precipitated by a sudden and savage attack of itchy eyeballs, requiring manual intervention. While this sort of thing might have been passable ten years

ago, we're a little more sophisticated and discerning these days. **NAG**

Tarryn van de<u>r Byl</u>





TOCA RACE DRIVER 3 CHALLENGE

RRP→ R499 | Publisher→ Codemasters | Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Games | Genre→ Racing

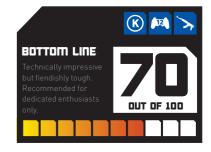
DON'T BE CONFUSED BY the name – this isn't a straight port from 2006's similarly titled Xbox and PS2 outing. Instead, while offering up some standard *ToCA* road scuffle fare, it also throws a new spin on the gameplay with the inclusion of its eponymous World Challenge mode. Here, players test their motoring mettle through five progressively ambitious mission-based tiers in the UK, USA, Australasia, Europe, and finally Worldwide, spanning 36 real-life circuits. And this is where the bit about 'dedicated enthusiasts' really comes into play.

See, instead of snagging the hole-shot, drifting corners, twisting metal, and gawping at the marvellous damage modelling, you're actually expected to, like, drive properly. That's right, each new tier kicks off with a series of driving tests and qualifiers that you're expected to pass before advancing to the actual racing bit. These range from time-based, coneslithering Steering Control events, to Braking tests, the (gasp!) No Damage challenges, where you'll need to bring your ride home unscathed, and the Pit In where you, er, successfully negotiate a pit stop. It's the stuff of hard-bitten champions, most assuredly, but it's not going to appeal to the average speed-demon-demolition-derby gamer.

There is a Free Race mode, but its car and circuit selection are lamentably restricted to whatever you've managed to unlock in the

World Challenge mode. For a racing title, there just doesn't seem to be terribly much racing going on. **NAG**

Tarryn van der Byl









12:00

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MOB





CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2007

RRP→ R399 | Publisher→ Eidos | Distributor→ WWE | Genre→ Sport/Management

WE'RE FED UP! FOOTBALL management games just don't make the crossover from PC to console with any real success. Moreover, when the game is Championship Manager 2007, things get even more horrific: cursors get lost in the multitude of selection bars available, and moving from one area in the game to another is shambolic. In addition, if you're playing on a PS2, you'll need a whopping 6MB free on your memory card.

We haven't even mentioned gameplay yet, but the title's console-gaming suitability is so lacking that it seems pointless to continue. Nevertheless, we shall.

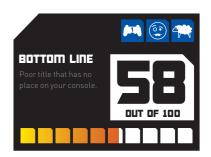
A number of features have appeared since last year's failure, including an increased focus on team-talks. Press conferences and

board appraisals have also been vamped up. Job interviews are testing affairs, and suitable coaching badges must be earned before even being allowed to manage a top team. Aside from all these niceties though, when the management side of the title comes into play, things quickly go pear-shaped. Players don't respond with any consistency to tactics and instructions. Matches last far too long, and with 50-plus matches a season, you'll probably be reading a book (like we did) while your team fights for the FA Cup.

Despite CM2007's vast supply of information and good intent, it plays like Heather Mills on a slippery pitch. Results are erratic, transfers are a joke, and the match engine doesn't work. Most tellingly,

it doesn't match up to Sports Interactive's Football Manager. So why bother? We suggest you don't. **NAG**

Ryan Kalis





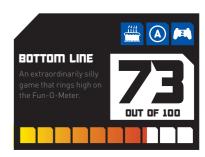
VIRTUA TENNIS 3

VIRTUA TENNIS IS EXACTLY that - a tennis game. You run up and down a tennis court chasing a ball. What makes this game different from other tennis games? Well, nothing much really. It's as stock standard as they get, and maybe a bit worse. Graphically, you'd expect a tennis game to look good, but it's only now and then that the game tries. When the other real-world' tennis players talk to you, the models are cool, but I don't think that the dialogue and models are synced properly. The screenshots of the game look better than it really is. As for the controls, you just hit any button just after your opponent hit,

and you'll hit the ball straight back. There isn't a huge difference in response when you play on grass or clay, which is a pity. Sound is what you'd expect. A soundtrack would have been nice, but hey, it's tennis. When you play the single-player campaign, you get to create your own character, which you have to put through training. This is a series of mini games where you have to hit balls at things that pop or explode. Your character stats then automatically go up depending on how you played. Lots of backhands, and backhands go up. Between this, you spend your time resting or playing tournaments where your rank goes up and you unlock

tennis goodies. There are better tennis titles than this, but not on the $360\,\mathrm{yet}$. NAG

Eddie Francis







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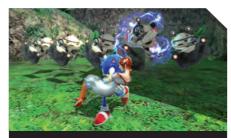


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SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (360

RRP→ R599 | Publisher→ SEGA
Distributor→ WWE | Genre→ Platformer

FYOU HAVE ALREADY bought this game, then I am so very, very sorry. There are not enough cuss words to describe just how badly SEGA screwed this one up, people. Sonic fans, I'm with you on this one: we have been forsaken! The following are not over-exaggerations. Thirty seconds to load a onesecond cut-scene and another 30-second load to show you the start of the level. Then, another 40 seconds of loading, running around a pointless city, and talking to people for no reason other than to get them to unlock the door to the next area. The horrible voice-acting and crappy visuals are so bad you'll think it's an old PlayStation 2 game. Sonic the Hedgehog features horrible controls, collision detection that fails, videos that lag and glitch, and constantly focuses on the broken combat instead of what Sonic is about: SPEED!

This list could go on for quite a while. There's no reason to buy this game. Fifteen years of service and this is how SEGA repays *Sonic*.

Miktar "WTF?!" Dracon





THE GODFATHER (PS3)

RRP→ TBA | Publisher→ EA

Distributor→ EA South Africa | Genre→ Freeform

HE GODFATHER DIDN'T REALLY shake up the gaming world - at the very least, the genre it occupied. That's a bit of a pity: The Godfather had and still has a great combat system, in both gunfights and the visceral moments where you bliskem some guy's teeth out. In the PS3 version, this is even more fun with the SIXAXIS support, which lets you slam people into walls and such. Overall, the game did a good job in bringing the movie to the virtual stage, and it's really something to relish. However, despite it all, The Godfather never was a good all-round game, mainly thanks to a rather bland world and generally silly AI. It's fun to play, but never sticks to your mind as a great game. The PS3 version does notch the graphics up a level with some new particle effects, but it's still the same old jacket. The new crimes and actions definitely make it the definitive

version, but if you've already played it, there's no point to do so again

James "Fredo" Francis





CALL OF DUTY 3 (PS3)

RRP→ R549 | Publisher→ Activision
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action

ET'S KEEP THIS SHORT: you know what Call of Duty is, right? If you don't, here's the skinny: the series, which started on PC and extended to the 360, features high-action, intense World War II battles that make you feel as though you're part of Band of Brothers or Saving Private Ryan. It's quite simply excellent and if it's your kind of thing, some of the best games you'll ever play. Call of Duty 3 isn't the best in the series, partially thanks to a different developer being used, and it lacks the new ideas we'd come to expect. Nevertheless, it keeps heavy company and COD3 in itself is a great game with some awesome moments. Unfortunately, the PS3 version has a few more issues than even the original release did, mainly a rather low framerate. However it

doesn't entirely spoil the broth, though you'll find it a shade less entertaining that the excellent *Resistance*. James "G.I. Joe" Francis

79 OUT OF 100



TEST DRIVE: UNLIMITED (PS2)

RRP→ R499.99 | Publisher→ Atari
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Racing

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED ACTUALLY runs on the PS2. Yes, it's not as pretty as the 360 version, but it's Test Drive. We expected the loading times to be much, much longer, but they're not that bad. Fair enough, you don't have even half the textures and the cars aren't as shiny and smooth. They are actually pretty dull by NFS standards. But hey, the entire island is there, with no loading times. The game plays just like the 360 version, but we think the music is better this time around. The cops also attack for any infraction, but only when they see you. It would be cool if you could change your controller layout, even if there were one or two presets. At least the stress of choosing your character is replaced: you get the first dude. If you only have a PS2, this game is well

Eddie Francis

74 OUT OF 100



SETTLERS OF CATAN (360)

RRP→ 800 MS Points | Publisher→ Microsoft
Distributor→ XB LIVE Arcade | Genre→ Strategy

T'S FITTING THAT ONE of the best board games of all time receives an official digital counterpart endorsed by its creator. Klaus Teuber. The heavy collaboration between Teuber and Big Huge Games on Catan shows: the AI is tricky, human and oddly entertaining as it emotes its love/hate for the dice, other players, or let you know what it thinks of you. A unique benefit of the board game becoming a game is that now you're free of the rules and what the other players have done, since the game handles all the underlying mechanics, leaving you to plan your strategy comfortably. There are two 'skins' to the game: one looks like the board game and the other brings depth and life to the tiles. The sheep even do a little dance. "The design is so elegant you can teach someone to play in minutes and then spend years trying to master it," is how Big Huge Games describes Settlers of Catan, and they

have done nothing in their rendition to counteract that.

Miktar "Got Wood for Sheep?" Dracon





FUZION FRENZY 2 (360) RRP→ R399 | Publisher→ Microsoft

Distributor→ MiDigital | **Genre→** Party

HILE WE GENERALLY LOVE mini games and games that fall in the Party genre, Fuzion Frenzy 2 is definitely the exception to the games and a story line (if you can call it that) that is pretty lame. The game also features a Tournament mode, which essentially comes across as a really cheesy 80's game show. The mini games show a lot of potential, but their implementation is rather bland. About 30 minutes into the game, we had a sudden urge to exit. After another hour of playing, however, we couldn't bear the pain any longer and exited. While we don't particularly like Fuzion Frenzy 2, it will definitely be a game that'll keep the young ones occupied for a while. However, compared to better party games plumber and friends or a load of crazy bunnies,

this falls way short.

Regardt van der Berg

40 OUT OF 100



REPUBLIC COMMANDO (PC

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ LucasArts
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action
PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

TO QUOTE OUR ORIGINAL review from two years ago, "Pandemic's *Republic Commando* seems to come from a bizarre twilight zone universe where squad-based combat is fast, easy, and intuitive. Computer Als don't get in your way, get themselves killed, or do what you don't want them to; voice acting is funny, gives characters depth, and isn't repetitive; and *Star Wars* games don't such "

In case you missed it the first time around, Republic Commando has hit the bargain bin. It's an excellent game, with much more than the usual run-and-gun FPS fare. The squad command system keeps things interesting, and the excellent voice acting and well-integrated Star Wars theme put it a cut above most other movie license titles.

Experienced troops may want to play it on hard – otherwise it may seem a bit short. Even if you're not an FPS fan, try this one.



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE LEGEND OF JACK SPARROW (PC)

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ Ubisoft
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action
PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

EE? THIS IS PROOF of two facts we should start Saffirming as indisputable. Firstly, license games sell - yeah, we all know that, but that this game sold enough to get a budget run is just the juicy proof we wanted. Secondly, it's not a bad idea to clone a good game. Sure, there's all the bleating about originality, but why reinvent the wheel every time? This game copies God of War, except it does it quite badly. Seriously, it's a rubbish game and it leaves one confused why it sold so many titles. On top of that, the PC version's controls were at most manageable. But, damn, even something bad that clones *God of War* is fun, so very few people care that it was really all-round rubbish. Nevertheless, the new budget price tag does fit it a lot better and can make it worthwhile.



OPEN SEASON (PC)

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ Ubisoft
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action
PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

LAY AS BOOG, THE big grizzly, as he and the buck, Elliot, raise an army of critters to take on the hunters out to kill them all. Wait, that's the movie! In the game, you play as Boog, but you largely run around and fetch things for other creatures, as well as throw creatures at hunters. Occasionally you don a shrubbery and you give the odd roar to scare away weaker hunters. You can learn new skills too and you run around in some pretty lush areas made of pretty pixels. The game sticks to the kid-friendly audience that it should, and the cartoon physics and cute critters are perfect for that. So, it's a game developed for kids, because for anyone else it'll be tedious. Then again, if you liked Open Season a lot, this might be exactly the game for you!



CALL OF DUTY 2 CLASSIC (360

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ Microsoft
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Action

NATURALLY, CALL OF DUTY 2 would become the 360's answer to Sony's Platinum range. The game took a commandeering lead on LIVE, only to eventually be dethroned by new heavyweights Rainbow Six and Gears of War, not to mention COD 3. It's also an awesome game, and until COD 4 arrives, the second game remains the best in the series. So, in other words, if you still haven't bought this and you enjoy first-person shooters on a console, just get it already. The second advantage is that COD 2 is still popular on LIVE, so there are plenty of people to play against. In addition, if you can clock it on veteran, it's 1,000 points on your Gamerscore All that in one budget buy, and plenty of screaming at Nazis, mortars, your own teammate and whoever will venture into the living room



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND (PC)

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ LucasArts
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Adventure
PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

THIS IS THE FOURTH and, as far as we know, last Monkey Island. Lucas Arts, while it still holds the license, doesn't seem to be thinking about continuing this great series. Instead, it will first be milked, which leads to a question: "Surely, it's about time that LucasArts releases a DVD version with all four games at one game's price?" Anyway, adventure game icon Guybrush Threepwood returns from his honeymoon to find that his wife, Elaine, is dead and is no longer governor! Meanwhile, Le Chuck is back and scheming with an Aussie to make the Caribbean a tourist trap. Clearly, foul things are afoot, so Guybrush has to save the day - again. It's still funny, but misses a few beats. Still, that can just be nostalgia talking. This, the fourth in the series, isn't as good as previous iterations, but is still a great game in its own rights.



STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR (PC

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ LucasArts
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Strategy
PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

ERE IS A TITLE that has been relegated to the budget category rather quickly. Is this fate deserved? Some would say yes, others would disagree. Empire at War, released just over a year ago, is a fairly innovative game that blends elements of real-time tactics and galactic conquest strategy. The latter element is reminiscent of turn-based games, but is actually in slow-paced real-time (which can be sped up to avoid boredom). Three levels of management are provided. The first is the galactic view, which allows players to order the construction of facilities and units on planets and space stations and to command armies and fleets to assemble and move. Once fleets engage, an orbital combat screen allows players to battle it out for control of the space around a planet. Thereafter, often a ground battle ensues, wherein players vie for control of the planet itself. This game is well worth it as a budget buy!

LEGO STAR WARS

Publisher→ Gameloft | Supplier→ Thumbtribe | Genre→ Puzzle

HE LEGO STAR WARS franchise has been very popular and now it has finally made its way to the mobile phone. The first one in the series is the prequel, which focuses on Anakin Skywalker as the hero. Unfortunately, the game starts at the beginning of episode 3 and not 1. But with this, the player will get to experience a lot of lightsaber action against some fairly stupid droids and other Al. There are 21 different rooms in the game in which the player must solve various puzzles in order to get to the next one, while fending off those droids. Unfortunately, it doesn't cover the whole span of the 3rd movie with only the beginning section where Anakin must save Senator Palpatine from the droid ship. Besides these randomly spread action

scenes, the game is basically more puzzle driven forcing the player to think rather than act and in the end. This game doesn't really justify itself other than making the player envious of the console version. It is a fun little game for a while, but can be a bit repetitive after that.





AMERICA'S ARMY

Publisher→ Gameloft | Supplier→ Thumbtribe | Genre→ Action

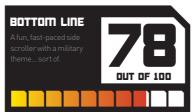
ALTHOUGH THIS GAME IS taken quite seriously on the PC, the mobile game version is actually moderately funny. This is not because the content is particularly amusing, mind you, but rather because the nostalgic nature of the game mechanics are a cause for amusement.

The game uses a side-scrolling format in a 2D environment, which is technically as old as the hills. This doesn't harm the game, though – in fact, it probably makes it better. Also, the variety of missions means that the player will be using more than a soldier character; the chopper missions, for example, are great fun.

America's Army can get pretty frantic, as any action game can, which can lead to a few problems. Most notably is the technically ineffective control systems used by mobile phone games... they work well for puzzles and one thumbers, but can get pretty annoying

in a fast-paced game. A little practice goes a long way, though, and the correct application of patience can lead to a very rewarding gaming experience.

Graphically, the game is on par with top- end titles like Splinter Cell: Double Agent. In fact, apart from the more action-packed style of the game and the various player controlled 'characters,' it is pretty much like that game. It's good fun and well worth the download. NAG





GHOST RECON 2

Publisher→ Gameloft | Supplier→ Thumbtribe | Genre→ Puzzle

GHOST RECON 2 FOR mobile phones is quite an enjoyable little futuristic shooter. It comprises some astounding graphics for the extra small screens and some impressive levels that will definitely keep the gamer occupied for a couple of hours. The only drawback to the game is its shortness; while playing you only go through eight different levels. Like other Tom Clancy games on the mobile phone, Ghost Recon displays elements ranging from stealth and silent kills to full-out action and assaults on the enemy base. The main objective of the game is to destroy the terrorists' super weapon with the help of an occasional ally, though their help is minimal compared to the console versions of the game. The game features an auto-aim function to make life a lot easier, and the

action more intense, as well as some superb sound effects. If you are worried about having to repeat large portions of the game, do not fear. The game comes with endless amounts of continues as well as a save feature. Unfortunately, once you have completed the game on hard, there is little more to do except play with its big brother. NAG





THIS JUST IN AT THE NAG OFFICE



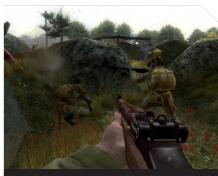
OVERLORD (360)

IKE A HUNGRY PACK of mean toddlers, your imps surround you and beat up anything you deem worthy up getting smeared across the pavement. Then the jolly bunch of you run down the hill to But after a while that gets boring and you head over to the Elven forest to spread some terror. That getting old? Well, there are still plenty of places to visit out there. Unfortunately the 'early review' build Codemasters sent along still had far too many bugs to regard as a final product, but we keep playing it anyway. Hopefully the final will be out by the time you read this, which means you should go out right now and get Overlord eternal gem in your game collection and might cause your significant other to hog your 360 for far too long.



SPIDER-MAN 3 (360)

Camera was all over the place and required us to constantly fiddled and adjust until we could see what it was we wanted to see. The combat system actually feels broken in comparison to Spider-Man 2. It flicks Spidy all over the place without any kind of intermediate animations, making the experience very mechanical. When just swinging around the city and taking in the sights, it looks totally pretty and even got a few 'wow' moments out of us. But what's with the slowdowns, lagging, occasional missing texture and frame-drop when you break something destructible? At least Bruce Cambell is there once more to give us some humour during the tutorial - because the rest of the game seems to be completely devoid of any mirth. Even Toby Maquire sounded bored.



MEDAL OF HONOR: VANGUARD (PS2)

CHINGHERE AHEAD OF Airborne, Medal of Honor's next-gen debut, Vanguard brings more MOH action to fans of the series. So far, though, you need to want more of the same if you want to get the maximum out of the game. Very little has changed since the last release, except for a few small changes. Vanguard mimics Airborne's parachute landing idea, which makes a change and you are finally able to run, for short bits at least. But so far it's really more of the same. Even the visuals aren't that big a step up. But if you are a fan, it's the MOH staple: planting explosives, rescuing people and shooting plenty of enemy combatants. It's tough-going and the game is pretty relentless. Vanguard hasn't made any clear case for why it's just another European Assault.



AEGIS WING (XBLA)

OW THIS IS THE kind of sweet little game that always manages to perk up your day when you discover it. The basic premise is the stockstandard side-scrolling space shooter where you pilot your little ship through a barrage of bullets while employing your bomb button to even the odds. The bombs in this come in a few flavours, one creates a shield that bounces back bullets and another lets you rip with a blossom of seeking missiles. What really brings it to the table though, is how any combination of up to four online or offline players can link up to each other slow) four-ship formation, the lead flies, the rest act like turrets and all four can use their bombs Best of all, Aegis Wing is 100% free to download off Xbox LIVE Arcade (but only if you have a North



FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES (PS3)

NSTEAD OF A PORT, SEGA has decided to grace the PS3 with a proper sequel. That would explain why Full Auto 2's presentation looks quite different. It's also really pretty, more so than the 360 game. That one, though, is already over a year old. Still, buildings explode, debris scatters all over the place, every explosion is a big thumping boom. Unfortunately it looks like the developers forgot to do more work on the rest of the game. The steering and physics really are just not up to it. The first game wasn't really polished to begin with, so you'd think SEGA would put a bit of emphasis on that for the sequel. It's perhaps not that smart to make both games in a series launch titles. Most of the time playing is spent thinking about how cool this game could have been. How can you go wrong with big guns strapped to your car hood?



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 07 (PS2)

T'S BEEN A YEAR or two, but the official UEFA game series has a new year in its stable. As you might expect, it plays exactly like FIFA and brings little in terms of new ideas there. But, like FIFA, it's fun. The operatic number that gets belted out every time you watch a match is also there for your aural pleasure. It's shaping up to be what football fans are expecting it to be – no less and no more. Yes, it looks to be the fix for any football game fan who needs to tie up the time between now and the next big beautiful game sim.

THESE GAMES AND MORE IN NEXT MONTH'S NAG

















TEAM FORTRESS

ANY WHO READ THIS article will mistakenly think we're talking about Team Fortress Classic, the Half-Life mod. No, we're talking about the original TF, the Quake mod. In fact, Team Fortress was the first major Quake mod, first appearing in July 1996, a month after Quake was released, and then having its first widespread release a month after that. This just narrowly beats out the even more popular ThreeWave CTF, which appeared in September '96.

For those unfamiliar with *Team Fortress*, it's a mod that often (but not always) involves a team-based capture the flag map. The main distinguishing feature of *TF* is the various classes. Instead of each player having equal weapons and abilities, the *TF* mod introduced nine different classes to pick from. The roles vary from things like Scout, who's fast but lightly armed and armoured, to Heavy Weapons Guy, who's the opposite. They also range from the traditional soldier, who is much like the default *Quake* character, to the engineer, who can build objects such as sentry guns and ammunition dispensers.

The significance of *TF* is that it paved the way for team-based, multi-role online gaming, essentially inventing the concept and model. It didn't copy it from other games such as the extremely popular *Starsiege*

Tribes, because it predated Tribes by almost two years. TF was popular enough that the creators, Australians Robin Walker, John Cook, and Ian Caughley, formed their own company called TeamFortress Software to begin developing Team Fortress 2 for the upcoming Quake II engine. However, TeamFortress Software was then bought by Valve in May 1998. Team Fortress Classic was released as a mod for Half-Life about a year later after a significant cleanup, and then work on TF2 began at Valve.

Some early concepts and engine development were shown, but *TF2* kept being pushed back. The original concepts seemed to be moving towards a more realistic game using an advanced next-generation engine. However, about a year after *TF Classic, Counter-Strike* appeared as an independent mod for *Half-Life*. The meteoric rise of *Counter-Strike* caused Valve to snap it up as well, and release it as a mod similar to *TFC*. This meant they already had one realistic team-based combat game, and *TF2* would likely compete in the same area on release.

Plagued by constant delays and competition with *CS*, *TF2* was eventually put on hold. Its engine, however, was completed and became the Source engine, used in *Half-*

Team Fortress



Team Fortress Classic



Team Fortress 2 (cancelled)



Team Fortress 2



Life 2 and other games. The long wait since the initial announcements of the TF2 project led many to believe it had been abandoned. However, new details have emerged regarding it in the last year, and it looks like it is on track to ship before the end of 2007.

The early screenshots and concept art, another mod, but with cell shading. However, recent videos of in-engine cut-scenes and Valve's technology demos show that TF2 has gone a completely different direction. Instead of focusing on realism, where Counter-Strike Source reigns supreme, the game has an extremely animated cartoonish look and feel. Valve has backed this up with state-of-the-art animation systems, which side-by-side comparison shows that while characters like Alex in Half-Life 2 had about 44 facial morphs, Heavy Weapons Guy now has 663. This allows animators to achieve new levels of expression and character development. We have a couple of videos and things comparing the two on our cover DVD this month. Have a look and form your own opinion. It looks like TF2 is shaping up to have a very different and interesting persona compared to most team FPS games.



NAME THAT GAME

50 HOW DID YOU do last month? Did you manage to guess all the games? You probably noticed that *Dungeons and Dragons Online* was shown twice, but we did that on purpose. We were trying to startle and confuse you with our trickery! So, now we're back with another month of Name that Game, where you, the reader, gets to win fabulous prizes courtesy of Megarom if you manage to correctly name all the games featured on this page. E-mail the names of all 24 games to nagcomps@tidemedia.co.za, and be sure to include your contact information and postal details. If you are the only person who gets them all right, you automatically win! If many people get them all right, then we will pick a totally random winner from the group that nailed all 24 games. If no one gets them all, the one who names most wins. [Competition closes when the next issue of *NAG* hits shelves, and so on and so forth]



LAST MONTH'S GAMES: 1 Age of Pirates; 2 Auto Assault; 3 Black and White 2; 4 Dark Messiah of Might and Magic; 5 Defcon; 6 Devil May Cry 3; 7 Dungeons and Dragons Online; 8 Dungeons and Dragons Online (loops!); 9 El Matador; 10 Fahrenheit; 11 Forbidden Siren; 12 Gene Troopers; 13 Guild Wars Factions; 14 Half-Life 2 Lost Coast; 15 Lineage II; 16 Need for Speed: Most Wanted; 17 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion; 18 Penumbra; 19 Shadow of the Colossus; 20 Shadowgrounds; 21 SiN Episodes; 22 The Godfather; 23 TimeShift; 24 Tomb Raider: Legend; 25* Vivisector (If you got that one you either cheated or work for NAC. It wasn't in the magazine!)

TOSHIBA TO PUNISH HD DVD CUSTOMERS

PECENTLY, NAGWAS IN Tunisia at a press event, and Manuel Linnig, Toshiba's Head of PR EMEA, discussed the state of HD DVD. Things got off on the people in here probably make a hobby of cracking our encryption." He then revealed Toshiba's strategy of having newer HD DVD discs require firmware updates to play. Someone pointed out that this would only punish legitimate consumers, not pirates, to which the response was, "If we only had good people we wouldn't have to do this kind of thing." Questions about how users with poor or no Net access would update their firmware raised more concerns, especially from the European press, when Linnig said he "couldn't imagine a place that had HD DVD but not broadband," and that in the "few cases" where this was true, customers could "take the player back to where they bought it and have it updated." Questions from the Linux community about future support were avoided and barely acknowledged

Shortly after, people began encountering the hexadecimal number 09F911029D74E35BD84156C563 5688C0 all over the Internet. This is the current HD DVD processing key. While it's useless to most mortals, it contains the potential for the Linux community to write themselves HD DVD players. It's appearing all over (on T-shirts, coffee mugs, in music, etc.) because Toshiba tried to shut down Digg when the number surface there, and when Digg complied, it triggered an online revolt.

For those wishing to hedge their bets in the HD DVD vs. Blu-ray Disc war, Samsung, LG and HP have all announced plans to have hybrid drives for PCs out by the end of the year.



WINDOWS XP TO RETIRE AT SEVEN. THAT'S A RESPECTABLE 49 IN DOG YEARS

ICROSOFT HAS CONFIRMED ITS January 2008 withdrawal of OEM Window XP licences for all major PC manufacturers, including HP, Dell, Toshiba, and Gateway. This applies to all versions of the operating system, including Tablet and Media Center editions. This means that vendors will no longer be able to offer new systems with XP as a pre-installed option.

The decision comes in the wake of a decidedly tepid response to XP's successor, Windows Vista. A recent survey by American market researchers, Harris Interactive, found that only 10% of respondents had planned to upgrade to the new operating system in the near future. Microsoft's XP moratorium will now force buyers to migrate to Vista, whether they like it or not.





IBM DEVELOPS 3D CHIP STACKING

BM HAS ANNOUNCED THE development of a new "Through-Silicon Vias" (TSV) technology, which allows vertical stacking of chips. Several other companies, including Intel and Samsung, have previously announced similar attempts, though it is unclear who will be the first to deliver it in a production CPU.

TSV works by creating contacts vertically through a stacked series of chips. This allows a much shorter and more direct connection than the traditional interchip method, which requires wires attached to the outside of the package and then traced to another chip on a printed circuit board. The ability to use any point on a chip's surface as a contact point for data transfer opens up many new possibilities.

Benefits could include far cheaper integrated chips for notebooks and cellphones where RAM is in the same package as the CPU or graphics cores. It also could be used in high-performance parts such as GPUs or CPUs with a large number of cores to stack several times as many units vertically than would be practical to produce using traditional horizontal techniques. However, the new technique is expected to be difficult to implement.



SONY

SONY'S OLED DRIVE

DIOTECHNOLOGY FTW! EARLIER THIS year, Sony showed off two prototypes of its Organic Light-Emitting Diode (OLED) displays at CES, and has since announced its plans to begin marketing one model later this year. While OLED displays are already present in digital cameras and phones, development costs and technology issues have thus far prohibited mass-production for larger applications such as televisions and displays.

An OLED's light-emitting layer comprises of a film of organic carbon-based molecular polymer, which glows when electrical current is applied, in a process called electro-phosphorescence. The upshot is that displays using this technology don't require backlighting, resulting in decreased power consumption and allowing for significantly smaller form factors.

The prototypes wowed attendees with their 1,000,000:1 contrast ratio and 3mm thickness. "LCD and plasma displays look faded in comparison," declared one onlooker.

Sony's first-of-its-kind market offering will be an 11-inch television display, featuring a W-SVGA resolution of 1,024 x 600.

"OLED sets are very expensive, and we mean to begin first by marketing the TVs as a status symbol," said Kazuhiro Imai, a senior manager of Sony's TV and Video business group. "We will see where the business goes from there."

OCZ DEVELOPS WORLD'S FASTEST RAM

WITH DDR3-SUPPORTING MOTHERBOARDS MAKING their rounds, DDR2 RAM may have its days numbered. However, until such time, Samsung continues to take strides in memory technology. The company recently introduced its first 4GB DDR2 DIMM based on WSP (or Wafer-Level Processed Stacked Package) technology. Said process is claimed to make the module smaller, but faster and more energy efficient as well. OCZ, on the other hand, has added a 1.2GHz set to its Flex XLC RAM range that makes use of a hybrid cooling system that melds passive air and liquid injection system to keep the modules as cool as possible. This new addition to the line confirms the OCZ PC-9600 set as the fastest DDR2 RAM around. With a rating of PC-9600, it's indeed the fastest RAM around and only comes in two 1,024MB kits. Memory timings for the RAM modules are as expected at 5-5-5-18, with the limited lifetime warranty covering voltages of up to 2.35V. The kit also features EPP support and 2.4V EVP, which is a further lifetime warranty for operational voltages of 2.4V. Pricing is said to be \$250 per kit, which puts it right in line with other high-performance modules.

HARDWARE SCORING SYSTEM

Our HARDWARE SCORING SYSTEM is based on the reviewer's expert opinion. The scale is from 1 to 5 with no fractional values. Each number has a specific meaning, described below. Most products will score 3 or 4, with the occasional 5 or 2, and almost never 1. Note that a high price alone can never lower a score below 3.

The stuff of Legends. Buy it while you can, I probably already have.

A good deal; worth it if you're shopping for one.

About what you'd expect, no problems. You might want to wait for it to go on sale.

This has some issues. You should probably shop around for something else if possible.

The stuff of Nightmares. You'll probably be sorry you got one, even if it was free.



GROUND ZERO

by Toby Hudon

I HAVE DONE THE MATH, AND FOUND THEM WANTING

THOSE WHO READ LAST month's column (if there were any) may have noticed the rather cumbersome labels of PC Component Company A and B. These were actually added by my editors, to replace the original names of actual PC component OEMs that I basically drew out of a hat to illustrate a point. There was concern that they might be offended at being associated with bananas, so names were changed to protect the stupid. So, since I can't do any precision targeting for fear of offence, I'll just break out the much bigger weapons that involve splash damage. It's time for... MATH! (Dramatic chord!)

I'm sure many of you are familiar with how badly we get ripped off on hardware, and the excuses involved. In this column, I'll show you exactly how you, in the comfort of your own home/office/bathroom/ dungeon, can figure out exactly how bad you're taking it when you buy hardware locally.

As we know, there are many factors in the cost of getting PC hardware into the country. So, how can we possibly compare this fairly with other countries' prices? We cannot. So, what am I doing then? Comparing South Africa's prices with themselves. Watch this!

Let's take graphics cards. I could use another example like motherboards, but it's essentially the same. For example, let's have a look at the GeForce 8800GTS 320MB and the 8800GTX 768MB. No specific manufacturer name required, any one will do. Now, these two cards fulfil the same function. The main difference is that one is a bit more high end than the other. However, in physical terms, they're roughly the same size and weight. The GTX has a slightly longer board [by about 4cm], but this is negligible because when boxed, the two products are effectively identical.

Now, if you do some local online shopping, you can find a 320MB GTS for about R2,800-R3,200 (VAT included). If you want a GTX, it'll be at least R6,500-R7,000. So what? The US price on the 320MBGTS is \$329 on average, and their GTX pricing is about \$559. These don't include tax, so you'd have to include 14% VAT on them. How do they compare? The exchange rate to the dollar is a bit under R7 at the moment, but let's use R7. Thus, for the GTS: $$329 \times 0.14 =$ \$46.06; \$329 + \$46.06 = \$375.06; and \$375.06 x 7 = R2,625.42. Not bad on the 320MB GTS - we're only paying about 15% more, which is pretty reasonable. For the GTX: $$559 \times 0.14 = 78.26 ; \$559 + \$78.26 =637.26; and $637.26 \times 7 = R4,460.82$. Hmm, at least a 45% mark-up! What happened here? The cards are the same size and weight, and from the same OEM, so they have to ship from the same place. Tariffs? Insurance? Even if these things were an issue, they'd force the price ratios closer, not spread them out. Why? Because the flat component of the import cost would

cheaper product, narrowing the price gap slightly and thus making the cost difference between the two less, despite an overall higher cost.

"But we get our stuff from the UK!" I hear in the back. No you don't. You get it from Asia – same as everyone else. Do you seriously think a graphics card company is going to ship a container to the UK, and then ship it back here? No, it's cheaper and faster to just send one directly here. But hey, I'll humour you guys. Doing an investigation on UK prices, we got averages of around £200 on the GTS and £375 on the GTX. A bit more than US prices at the current \$1.98 to the pound rate. Those include 17.5% VAT though. So let's untangle this mess: $(£200/1.175) \times 1.14 \times 13.75 = R2,668.09$; and $(£375/1.175) \times 1.14 \times 13.75 = R5,002.66$. Hmmm.... those don't look all that much worse than the US prices now, do they? Certainly nothing like our pricing. Here's a nifty table:

	GTS 320MB	GTX 768MB	GTX/GTS ratio
USA	\$329	\$559	170%
UK	£199	£375	188%
South Africa	R3,000	R6,500	217%
SA vs. USA	114%	146%	
SA vs. UK	112%	130%	
UK vs. USA	102%	113%	

I have a few words for this: they're animals and a by-product. All the variables are eliminated in this case: brand, size, weight, count per container, shipping route, tariffs and duties, etc. All that's left is pure greed!

Like I said, I can do this with motherboards or many other things that have high-end and low-end versions that are the same size and weight. It's consistent. So, could someone please explain this to me: Why can I, as a mere mortal, buy a retail part in the USA, pay their taxes, ship to a US address (with insurance), and then pay a shipping company to send it here (with insurance), pay SA customs tariffs and duties and VAT, and still pay **less than the dealer price** on the same part locally in most cases? How can it possibly cost giant corporations with volume discounts and deals more than it does me? There recently was a big uproar over the "first card to sell for over the equivalent of \$1,000" in the UK. We've been paying **more** than that on top-end cards for years now!

And if you're doing this to your customers and think they can't produce a four-function calculator and check how it smells, guess again! **The oil industry has lower margins than this!** We know the Radeon HD 2900XT will be \$399 and £220 and it's targeted at the GTS – NOT the GTX! That comes out to about R3,200 and R3,450 after adding VAT. If you see them selling for more than R4,000 by the time you read this, I think you know what conclusion you can draw. **NAG**

All the variables are eliminated in this case: brand, size, weight, count per container, shipping route, tariffs and duties, etc. All that's left is pure greed!

be a bigger bump on the



WHO'S TO BLAME?

FTER NUMEROUS SCREENSHOTS OF next-generation game content on both consoles and PCs, to actually seeing the consoles in action, one cannot help but be under-whelmed by some of the promises made that didn't materialise. With the PlayStation 3 touted to be the most powerful consumer product ever, matching and exceeding some super computers from some years ago, one would have expected truly breathtaking visuals in almost all titles. This is not the case, and both the Xbox 360 and PS3 haven't been used to their full potential. As end-users, we are constantly being made aware of the latent power of these consoles and computer graphics cards, even though most of the time there's no real way to relate to that power without resorting to superfluous numbers that we are usually not capable of arriving at ourselves. [These mostly serve to illustrate the superiority of technology A over technology B.]

Inevitably, we rejoice at these phenomenal numbers and even believe the impossible marketing. One only has to turn to the history of the PSX, which was said to be as powerful as five Pentium CPUs. How this was measured and how that could have ever been true will remain a mystery. However, the claim served its purpose and is sure to have had many decide against the competing consoles of the time, opting for a super computer like the PlayStation. The PlayStation 2 also made such bold claims: at some point it was two thousand times more powerful than the original unit. Since this is never really explained nor rarely challenged, it escaped the vast majority that by such a bold claim, the PlayStation 2 was as powerful as 10,000 Pentium CPUs. Clearly, an impossible situation, but one that helped sell the unit.

The more outlandish the claims, the more excitement they generate, which will help shift that many more units.

With the PlayStation 3, we find ourselves once again face to face with awesome power that, according to some in the know, should be almost impossible to comprehend. As fantastic as the Cell processor is and the console is, it should be blatantly obvious to us that if such a powerful processing unit is relying on an ASIC from mid-2005, then surely it cannot be the most powerful consumer piece of hardware available today. The RSX core that drives the graphics processing in the PlayStation 3 is a toned-down version of a consumer-level discreet graphics card in the form of the GeForce 7800. Yes, it's true that the RSX has an extra quad (making it 28 shaders instead of 24),

With the PlayStation 3 touted to be the most powerful consumer product ever, matching and exceeding some super computers from some years ago, one would have expected truly breathtaking visuals in almost all titles. This is not the case, and both the Xbox 360 and PS3 haven't been used to their full potential.

but that extra quad is for redundancy. So, what is it exactly in actual tangible and relevant terms that we should be getting excited about?

The software: that's what should be our primary focus. Note that this is not about playability and other aspects that are pivotal to what we call games, but the software in terms of what can be achieved with the underlying power. It's true that the lack of processing power can result in less than optimal artwork and the like, but this same processing power, or lack thereof, can only be accessed by the software directly and not the end-user. So, who is to blame here? The developers, that's who! Yes, it's becoming increasingly more expensive to produce incredible visuals and physics in games, but it's not only the developers who incur these increasing costs. Everybody, from the hardware manufacturers right down to the end-user, carries the costs of this trend. IHVs spend billions on R&D and developers spend millions on games we end up buying. So, if we as end-users get excited about the hardware and buy said hardware months before the true value of our products is realised, why is it that at every turn it's the developers complaining about the rising costs of game development? We have performed our parts and so have the hardware manufacturers. Where are the developers? NAG



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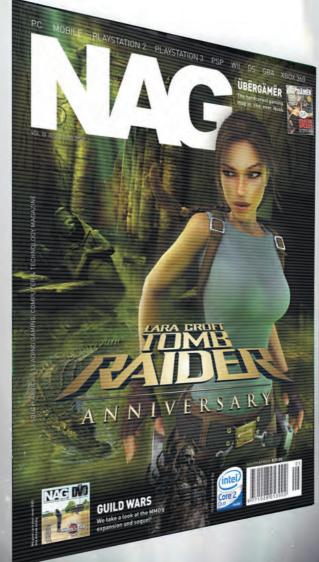
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CER LCDS ARE BECOMING rather popular locally. At last year's rAge, we saw quite a few AL1951 LCDs, which we had reviewed, showing up at the LAN. For this year, Acer has

introduced a few new products, including the

gigantic AL2623W.

Apart from the resemblance to its sibling, the AL2616W, this monitor is hard to mistake for anything else. It's positively huge, and will likely draw stares as well as second glances if you show up at a LAN with it, or plop one down on your office desk. Yes, there are larger LCDs like the Dell 27-inch model, but they retail for about twice the 2623's price tag, and often don't quite match this LCD's raw performance in terms of response time, brightness, and contrast ratio.

While we're on the subject, this LCD performed quite well. It's incredibly bright, and the DCR (Dynamic Contrast Ratio) feature makes it seem even more so. DCR scans the display for the average brightness of the pixels, and then adjusts the backlight intensity accordingly. Acer claims that this doubles the contrast ratio from 800:1 to 1,600:1 when enabled, and after trying it, we believe it. At first, we were sceptical and thought the constant backlight switching it's almost never noticeable. It happens so quickly that it appears seamless, and is great for watching movies in the dark, as it greatly reduces the inability to get good blacks in dark scenes while having a decent brightness in lighter ones. Things sometimes appeared

a bit over-bright and washed-out at first, especially yellows like Windows folders, but once we adjusted the contrast down a little to account for DCR, it cleared up nicely.

The response time was also quite good: 5ms grey to grey is nothing to scoff at. Fast-moving things would get slightly blurry, but only if you were really looking for them and not paying attention to the action on the display. Part of this is because the LCD is so huge: any imperfections are much more noticeable than on a smaller display. We had no problems playing a wide assortment of games and getting a great picture. The 1,920 x 1,200 resolution is a great fit for a top-end graphics card like a GeForce 8800GTX, which has enough power to really show what this screen can do. However, other cards might still be able to keep up, since the resolution is so high that antialiasing is pretty much unnecessary.

One place the AL2623W comes up a little short is in ports. There's only VGA and DVI [the audio pass-through is barely worth mentioning], which is fine for most PC-only users. However, when we tried hooking up an Xbox 360, we ran into some problems: the screen refused to support 1080i over the VGA port, and would incorrectly set to 1,680 x 1,050 with the picture offset when we tried. Other resolutions such as 720p worked perfectly, and the up-sampling to the native 1,920 x 1,200 was better than we expected. However, if you intend to use an LCD with a console, you may want to look for one with component

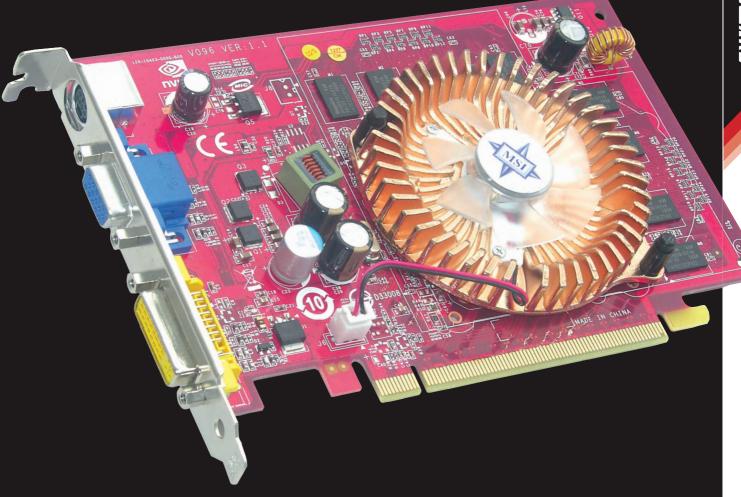


SPEC5		
SIZE	26 inches	
RESOLUTION	1,920 x 1,200	
RESPONSE TIME	5ms grey to grey	
BRIGHTNESS	500 nit	
PORTS	VGA, DVI, Audio	
ASPECT RATIO	16:10 wide	
CONTRAST RATIO	800:1 (1,600:1 with DCR)	
SCORE		
BETTER THAN: 1,680 x 1,050 LCDs		
WORSE THAN: Next-generation, LED-backlit LCDs		

connectors - or HDMI if you have a PS3. Acer claims that the 2623 supports HDCP over DVI, so an adapter might work in that case, but we didn't have one on hand to test it.

If you're primarily a PC user and just want a single display for all your gaming and movie needs, the AL2623W is an excellent candidate. The only downside might be the price tag, which, while much cheaper than many competitors, is still about the price of three AL1951 19-inch LCDs. If we could keep it, we probably would - just for the sheer intimidation factor. NAG

Toby Hudon



MSI NX8500GT 256MB

py THE TIME YOU read this, word would be out that the G84 and G86 GPUs are nothing like the G80 cores they're derived from. Before we go further into examining this MSI product, it is imperative that one knows what the 8600GT GPU consists of. At its core is the G86 GPU manufactured at TSMC using the 80nm process technology, which is in essence a linear shrinking of the 90nm GT lithographic technology. This gives the 8500GT favourable power consumption figures, even though the core consists of 210 million transistors. As impressive as that is, it's about the only thing that's impressive about the 8500GT - other than the video-processing features, which we'll get to a little later.

Just like the G80, the G86 core is a DirectX 10 part, ticking all the boxes that qualify it as a next-generation, low- to mid-range graphics part. At its heart, the G86 features 16 stream processors - or simply put, one cluster unit of stream processors. This is one eight of the cluster units available on the 8800GTX. Paired with this cluster unit is a single 128-bit memory interface that isn't divided by a memory crossbar of any kind. A single 64-bit channel is further divided into 32-bit channels that can be used for sending or receiving data simultaneously.

To make a bad situation worse, the 8500GT is paired with only four texturing units, albeit ones that are a little more advanced than those found on the 8800GTX.

(There are four addressing units along with four sampler units.) This difference helps a little in alleviating the limited texturing capabilities of the GPU in some situations where subsequent samples may not belong to the same polygon or model even. Other than that, it's business as usual, with each of the stream processors capable of receiving vertex, fragment and geometric instructions in any order.

The 8500GT PCB is the same PCB that is used on the 8600GT/GTS and 7600GT/GS, and is a slightly modified 6600GT PCB from late 2004. So, the cost cutting on the 8500GT is at every level and the performance in games shows.

The 8500GT might be DirectX 10-compliant, but it's hideously slow compared to the 7600GS and 6600GT even. We wonder what the actual purpose of this graphics chip is. Is NVIDIA even aware of the terrible performance this card produces? Overclocking the card from the default 450MHz does help a little, but not enough to make this card worth buying. Nevertheless, MSI has put together a descent package with everything you need to get started: all the cabling for video output (including HD component output), a DVI converter and all the driver disks (which are best left in the box as the drivers provide even less performance than the latest 158 series).

Things look better for the 8500GT in the video-processing department. The

I	SPEC5		
	GPU	G86	
	CORE CLOCK	450MHz	
	SHADER VERSION	SM 4.0	
	STREAM PROCESSORS	16	
	VIDEO MEMORY	256MB	
	MEMORY CLOCK	400MHz	
	MEMORY BUS	64-bit	
	SCORE		
	BETTER THAN: Entire GeForce FX family		
	WORSE THAN: Everything after the GeForce FX family		

686/684 cores feature an on-board HD processing logic, which is superior to that on the 8800 series by quite a margin. In this regard, there is virtually no video stream the 8500GT isn't capable of handing, and the playback quality is remarkably better with NVIDIA's PureVideo HD. For a home theatre system, the 8500GT is good, but would be even better if it had an HDMI connector. As far as being a cheap upgrade to DirectX 10, it's not as successful as we had hoped.

Neo Sibeko

LOGITECH CORDLESS MEDIABOARD KEYBOARD FOR PS3

RRP→ R299 | Supplier→ Logitech
Website→ www.logitech.com | Brand→ Logitech

THE PLAYSTATION 3 WANTS to be your computer! Then again, it certainly has the punch to be a decent enough personal computer style system, with all the Web browsing, slideshow viewing and MP3 playing it can do. However, when it comes to entering text, that cellphone-style multi-press system is just downright painful. Enter Logitech with its wireless keyboard and it looks like a winner.

The MediaBoard comes with a USB RF dongle that you plug into a free USB port on the PS3, and when you want to use the keyboard for whatever, you just grab it and switch it on and type away. The keyboard itself is Logitech quality and class: silver finish with responsive keys that have a very shallow key throw, but not uncomfortable to type on. On the right-hand side is a nice little touchpad that actually accurately controls the mouse cursor in the Web browser and the PlayStation Store.

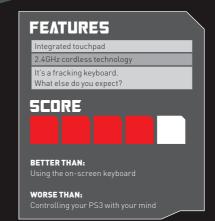
The keyboard is perfect for typing messages, chatting with a friend or typing in your credit card details when you want to buy something from the Store. The touchpad is responsive, with two buttons below it for

left-mouse and right-mouse buttons. There is also a left-click button on the left of the spacebar on the far left of the keyboard itself, so you can comfortably sit and browse without suffering

It's hard for a keyboard to do anything seriously wrong, especially when you're dealing with Logitech. The MediaBoard works, does what you expect it to and is priced fairly. NAG

from carpal tunnel syndrome.

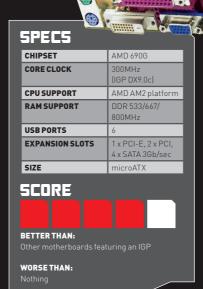
Miktar "QWERTY" Dracon





RRP→ TBA | Supplier→ ASUSTeK Computer Inc Website→ http://za.asus.com/ | Brand→ ASUS

T'S BEEN SOME TIME since AMD announced the 690 (and 690G) platform. While it may have received more than its fair share of media coverage, it's largely an ignored platform because it's not aimed at the 'high performance at any cost' market. Where it is targeted at, however, in the HTPC or OEM market, the 690G chipset excels and is superior to competing platforms from NVIDIA and Intel. The on-board graphics are fully DirectX 9.0c-compliant, and while the performance isn't earth shattering, it's better than the NVIDIA 6100 and 6150 platforms, and far superior to any Intel integrated graphics platform. The HDMI connector on this motherboard is one of its highlights. More than that, however, this ASUS board is slightly superior to the rest in that it actually features overclocking options. They are not extensive by any measure and would be sub-par on a standard ATX board, but that you can change memory speed, CPU VCore, of using faster memory on a motherboard can never be understated because it not only boosts overall system performance, but



graphics performance as well. With the right configuration and balance of features, games such as *Doom 3* and *Unreal Tournament 2004* are playable on this platform. They may not be the latest titles available, but it's worth noting that no other IGP can provide playable framerates in these titles at 1,024 x 768. This motherboard won't set the enthusiast community on fire, but it will bring more to the HTPC market than other boards that feature weak graphics parts, no HDMI capabilities, or both. With the ability to operate a full 16-lane PCI-E graphics card, this board is very hard to fault as it borders on perfect for its purpose. NAG

Neo Sibeko

INTEL CORE 2 EXTREME QX6800

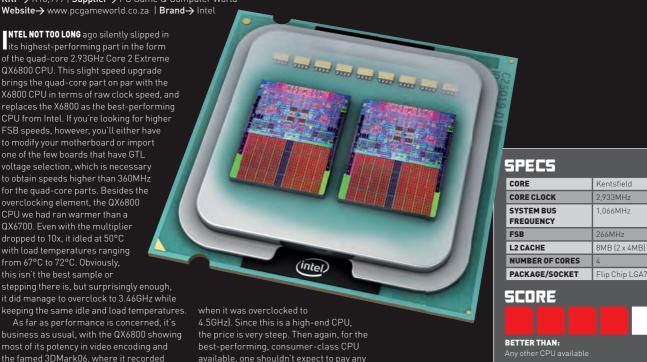


As far as performance is concerned, it's business as usual, with the QX6800 showing most of its potency in video encoding and the famed 3DMark06, where it recorded over 4,000 points in the CPU test, thoroughly beating the Core 2 Extreme X6700 (even

with load temperatures ranging

from 67°C to 72°C. Obviously,

this isn't the best sample or



::: entertainmentafrica.com

Neo Sibeko



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WORSE THAN:

reviews exclusives events firstplavs downloads dvds-umd comps gadgets showtimes

Herocor3



One of the known laws of computing is that no matter how much disk space you have, your Une of the known laws of computing is that no matter now much disk space you have, your files will expand to fill it. What seems like an impossibly enormous capacity soon becomes files will expand to fill it. What seems like an impossibly enormous capacity soon becomes inadequate. That immense 40MB HDD, the huge 650MB burnable CD, that crazy 2GB HDD, Impossible to fill void of 4.7GB DVDs... Yean!

Hands up how many are familiar with this scenario: Everything you install complains and fails, you spend hours combing folders for old temporary files, start uninstalling programs fails, you spend hours combing folders for old temporary files, start uninstalling program you haven't used in a while, and maybe even debating which parts of your precious media impossible to fill void of 4.7GB DVDs... Yeah! you haven t used in a while, and maybe even debating which parts of your precious media collection you could do without. The room is already full of burned discs strewn about every

contection you could do without. The room is already full of burned discs strewn about every surface, many of which are in an unknown state of decay. It's time for a new drive! Therefore, this most business and a line of the surface of the surfac surface, many of which are in an unknown state of decay. It's time for a new drive! There there is a new drive the end. The surface is a sampling of what's out there, from low end to high end.

MAXTOR DIAMONDMAX 20 160GB



At the one end of the spectrum, we have the 160GB Maxtor DiamondMax 20. For those out of the loop. Seagate acquired Maxtor, so this is actually a re-branded Seagate Barracuda 7200.9. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as the Barracuda is one of the most popular and successful lines of hard drives out there.

In terms of performance, it has a good maximum transfer rate and a decent average, but the real killer is the seek time. Seventeen milliseconds aren't exactly

stellar, though as we're all aware, the numbers listed in the specs are always a bit too optimistic for reality. The 2MB of cache is quite small by modern standards, and despite being half the height of the other drives, it was the only one that got hot enough even outside the case to cause concern.

Still, if you need space and you only have about R500 to spend, it beats the heck out of sorting through a pile of burned DVDs in seek time.

FEATURES

MODEL → STM3160211AS

CAPACITY →160GB

INTERFACE → SATA 3Gb/sec

RPM → 7,200

CACHE →2MB

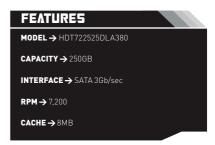
HITACHI DESKSTAR T7K250 250GB



A relatively common drive, the Deskstar's a pretty good pick for almost any system. Two hundred and fifty gigabytes is a bit small by today's standards, but it's still a high-end drive in terms of specs and features. Therefore, if space were a secondary concern to budget, this wouldn't be a bad pick.

This drive achieved the best seek time of 13.0ms, narrowly squeezing out the Western Digital 500 and Seagate 750. It was

also quite cool and not overly loud, and, therefore, pretty much a good drive overall. The only downsides are the small space, as we mentioned, and the lower than average transfer rate. The 8MB cache didn't seem to cause as much of a drag as the 2MB on the Maxtor, and not too much loss from the 16MB on the bigger drives. The sustained rates are a bit low compared to the other internal drives, but will certainly outrun most older HDDs.



WESTERN DIGITAL CAVIAR SE16 500GB

Supplier→ Pinnacle Micro | Website → www.pinnacle.co.za | RRP → R1.270



Here we come to our pick of the litter: the Caviar SE16. At 500GB, it certainly has room to spare for most, and surprisingly, isn't as much of a budget killer as you might think. The real special part, though, is that it pretty much wiped the floor with the other drives in terms of performance.

Even the 750GB Barracuda 10 wasn't a match for this drive in transfer rate. It's no Raptor, but it's pretty close in transfer rate,

and doesn't drop below 70MB/sec until about the 300GB mark, which is nice. The only time it took a back seat was in seek times, where it lost out to the Hitachi drive, but it came in second overall.

Considering that it costs a bit less than two 250GB drives or three 160GB drives, and about half as much as a 750GB drive, this is the sweet spot. If you can afford it, buy one of these. If you need more space, buy two.

FEATURES MODEL → WD5000AAKS CAPACITY → 500GB INTERFACE → SATA 3Gb/sec RPM → 7,200 CACHE → 16MB

SEAGATE BARRACUDA 7200.10 750GB

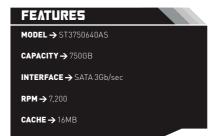
Supplier + Eurobyte | Website + www.eurobyte.co.za | RRP - R2,506.86

If you like big drives, this is where it's at. While 1TB disks may be on the horizon, they haven't quite gotten here yet. Therefore, for now, the 750GB Barracuda is the king of the hill in terms of space. Surprisingly, it's not an overly hot or loud drive, so it might be a contender for your infinite PVR of doom to record everything that shows on TV ever.

However, it was a bit mediocre in the performance department. It couldn't quite catch the Western Digital 500GB in either seek time or transfer rate. It also showed a few really high seek times (over 30ms)

strewn across the disk, which is a bit unnerving from a reliability point of view

Given that this is the largest-capacity drive out there, it has a high price premium as you might expect. If you're limited by the number of drives you can fit and want a massive amount of space, such as needed in a home theatre PC, this is about as good as you'll get for now. However, if you can fit twice as many drives, you could get two 500GB drives and wind up with more space and speed if you throw them in a RAID.



BUFFALO DRIVESTATION 320GB

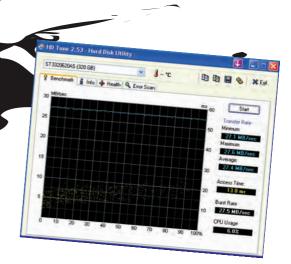


Here we have an external hard drive from Buffalo. Some might wonder what an external drive is doing in this roundup, but hey, not everyone is interested in poking around inside their PCs to upgrade their storage space. It may be that there's no room for another drive, or just more convenient to have a drive that can be moved around and shared between, say, a home PC and a work PC. Therefore, we have a couple of externals to show as well.

Buffalo has recently entered the local market, and sent us the 320GB version of their external 3.5-inch DriveStation range. Inside is a Seagate Barracuda 7200.10 (ST3020620AS), which, unfortunately, is more than enough to peg the USB 2.0 interface to its limit. The drive

never wavered from about the 27MB/sec mark, which is good for USB, but pretty sad compared to an internal HDD, which would have over twice the transfer rate. Seek times were good though, coming in on par with both 3.5-inch Western Digital drives.

However, performance isn't really the point of this product. In terms of design, we liked the Buffalo a little more than the external Western Digital box. It's mostly a personal preference thing. The Buffalo drive is a bit shorter and much longer, but felt a bit more solid. The power brick was quite a bit bigger, but overall we liked the box design a bit more as it seemed less likely to have a problem if dropped (which we didn't actually test).



FEATURES

MODEL → HD-HC320U2-2

CAPACITY → 320GB

INTERFACE → USB 2.0

 $RPM \rightarrow 7,200$

CACHE → 16MB

WESTERN DIGITAL MYBOOK
ESSENTIAL EDITION 250GB

Supplier -> Pinnacle Micro | Website -> www.pinnacle.co.za | RRP -> R1,050



Western Digital has several versions of the MyBook series. The Essential Edition is basically the no-frills, low-cost edition for basic external storage. That's not necessarily a bad thing, since often the additional features on things like this get a bit frivolous. It's a pretty simple product: a black box with 250GB of space that plugs into a USB port and a power socket.

While it's a bit smaller than the Buffalo drive physically, it also felt a bit flimsier. We didn't try abusing it, so that's not really an indication of real-world reliability. The rubber

feet also had a tendency to pop off, but this wasn't really a major problem.

However, the on/off button was somewhat annoying. Unlike the switch on the back of the Buffalo drive, this drive uses a big round power button on the front. This makes it easy to access, which is probably more a bad thing than good. It was way too easy to accidentally bump the drive and turn it off - potentially disastrous in the middle of a file operation. Therefore, if we had to pick between the two, we'd have to say go with the Buffalo drive for this reason alone.

FEATURES MODEL → WD1GU2500 CAPACITY → 250GB INTERFACE → USB 2.0 RPM → 7,200 CACHE → 8MB

WESTERN DIGITAL PASSPORT 80GB

Supplier→ Pinnacle Micro | Website → www.pinnacle.co.za | RRP → R895

Western Digital is a very high-tech company. Secretly, their scientists have laboured night and day to find a surface even more annoying than that of Sony's PlayStation Portable. It was once believed that nothing could surpass the PSP in its ability to attract dust and scratches. But then, late one night, a breakthrough was made: a material so soft negative numbers need to be added to Moh's Hardness Scale and which can actually warp space to attract dust from other dimensions!

Okay seriously, this thing got swirl scratches from our micro-fibre cloth we use to dust products for photos. It also was able to pull non-existent dust off the clean cloth and come out dustier than when we started. So, sorry if we were unable to touch it up enough in Photoshop

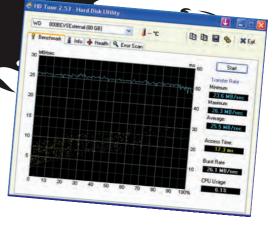
to make it look clean.

Cosmetics aside, it's a laptop drive in a box. The nice part is that it's powered by USB, so you don't have to haul a brick around to plug it in. The not so nice part is that it uses one of those mini-USB connectors, and Western Digital included the shortest USB cable we've ever seen. You'll be lucky if it can reach your motherboard's USB ports if it sits on top of your case. It is obvious it's intended more as a laptop-companion product. As for performance, what do you want from a poor little 2.5-inch drive? It's bigger than any flash drive (for now), and doesn't need power - so two plusses there. Nevertheless, it's definitely possible to find these in casings that are more resilient.

Conclusion

If you need to carry lots of data all over the place and don't want it to be a hassle, that Western Digital Passport drive is probably a good idea. If you sometimes, but not too often, move data around, you might want

to grab a Buffalo DriveStation. If you don't have a screwdriver phobia, go with the 500GB Caviar if you can afford it. If not, then your choice will probably be determined by your budget. NAG



FEATURES

MODEL → WDXMS800

CAPACITY → 80GB

INTERFACE → USB 2.0

RPM \rightarrow 5,400

CACHE → 2MB

E-SPORTS GO MAINSTREAM – AND NOT EVERYONE'S HAPPY ABOUT IT

THIS MONTH, THE THREE largest American e-sports organisations announced their final game selections for the 2007 season. While there have already been some surprises, such as DirecTV picking Counter-Strike: Source for its televised Championship Gaming Series, no one could have been prepared for the shock that was to follow The World Series of Video Games (WSVG) was the first to drop the bomb on 4 April with the following list: World of WarCraft (WoW) and Quake 4 on PC, and Guitar Hero II (GHII) and Fight Night Round 3 (FNR3) on Xbox 360. While Quake in its various forms has been a tournament staple since the birth of e-sports, the other three games will be featured as part of a major tournament circuit for the very first time. All of them are immensely popular and have communities far larger than that of Quake 4, but are they suitable for competitive play?

Matt Ringel, President of Games Media Properties and league coordinator for the WSVG, believes they are. "When we choose games, we look at three things," he says. "How does the game work as a competition title? What kind of community support does it have? And how much fun is it to watch?" The latter, it seems, has been the deciding factor for Mr Ringel. His organisation's partnership with College Sports TV, and the fierce rivalry DirecTV is about to bring to the market, has made the viewing experience a primary concern. Indeed, the reason for the exclusion of Counter-Strike 1.6 - which is what all the naysayers are really complaining about - is that it cannot be aired on television. The prevailing rumour is that Valve Software has already licensed. Counter-Strike: Source exclusively to DirecTV, and doesn't want the older version shown to the public.

"Some of the games we've used in the past are amazing competition titles, but they don't work for spectators at all," says Mr Ringel. "Those games will always be problematic."

But how will the tournaments for these experimental new titles function? World of WarCraft, for example, will pit teams of three against each other in Blizzard's new Arena system, which was designed especially to cater to the more competitive of the game's eight million players. Matt Ringel is hoping its phenomenal popularity (it even appeared on South Park) will make up for any shortcomings. History may prove him right.

But as strange as the WSVG's choices are, they pale in comparison to those of the Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL), which announced its list on 23 April. The CPL had previously been the champion of the old school. While all other American organisations were making the move to Counter-Strike: Source, the CPL stood firm and declared itself loyal to the 1.6 community. And, following a worldwide gamer opinion poll, a decision was reached to support Quake III (which hadn't been used since 2005) as the main one-versus-one title.

Yet, Angel Munoz, the CPL's boss and arguably the father of professional e-sports, had even some of his most faithful supporters turning on him when he revealed a new partnership with Sierra Entertainment, and a \$500,000 World Tour featuring only F.E.A.R. on Xbox 360 and World in Conflict (as yet unreleased) on PC - both Sierra titles. No sign of Quake III or Counter-Strike 1.6. Since the announcement, Mr Munoz has made no apologies to the aggrieved communities, only stating that the CPL is "unafraid to try new things." The other possibility, of course, is that he had no choice, and that without the Sierra deal the CPL would no longer exist at all. Needless to say, for many gamers it no longer does.

Both of these titles are hugely troublesome for e-sports, and amount to little more than a very expensive Sierra publicity campaign. While the Xbox version of F.E.A.R. is bad enough (the multiplayer has been criticised as random and frustrating even by pro console gamers), World in Conflict cannot possibly serve the interests of good competition if nobody even has a chance to practice it properly. There is talk of a "CPL Beta Testing Phase" in which competitors will get the chance to play the game before its release, but this will either limit the competitive field severely, or prove highly unfair for those who don't get the chance to participate in it. This is assuming the game is even good. World in Conflict's selection marks the second time Mr Munoz has broken his promise never to select an unreleased title. In addition to Counter-Strike: Source, the league will be supporting FIFA '07 (PC), Dead or Alive 4 (Xbox 360) and Project Gotham Racing 3 (Xbox 360).

The overriding message in all this is clear. Professional gaming – at least, in the





Guitar Hero II and World of WarCraft will be making their competitive debuts United States – is moving on. There is no longer room for the older, more established titles as e-sports hit the airwaves. Whether this is the correct direction or not will have to be judged in retrospect, but the organisations seem ready to abandon their core constituencies en masse. One major conclusion can be drawn from this: as upset as the Counter-Strike 1.6 and Quake III communities are, e-sports have grown to a level where they are no longer needed. Replacing the tried-and-tested veterans with new mainstream blood is now possible, and this signifies an important shift in the tides of professional gaming. Ironically, the trend seems to be moving away from the sporting model and back towards the original idea of "gaming for fun." We will have to wait and see if it lasts. NAG

Anton Lines

MAYHEM EASTER LAN

HELD: 28 April SITE: www.mayhem.co.za

EING APRIL, THE MONTH of Easter eggs, we decided to give Easter goodies to everyone as they entered the event. The morning started a tad slow, but picked up as more people joined our civilisation of gamers. We had a nice turnout: 160 to 260 people. While we saw the return of some older games, we also noticed the appearance of some newer titles.

During the day, we saw a lot of Command & Conquer 3. I can still remember that crisp smell of victory when I eventually got my childproof box open. Later in the day, we dived into Natural Selection, which seems to be growing in popularity. We had tons of fun, especially when people were screaming over their computers because our lovely commander, 'Annihilator', forgot to give us new orders. We saw the usuals there: DotA, Quake III, Counter-Strike and Unreal Tournament 2004. Unfortunately, the consoles

were left gathering dust. Well, I guess people can only take so much of the *Super Mario Party* theme music before they asphyxiate, although some people did drag their Xboxes with for fun. Our next event is the ESWC (on the 9th and the 10th of June), but keep your eyes on our Website (www.mayhem.co.za) for other possible events. Remember people, the more the merrier! So, bring your friends with for a little monthly Mayhem. **NAG**

Zakeroph TFD (Staff@mayhem.co.za)



CABAL ONLINE

Publisher→ Games-Masters.com | Website→ www.cabalonline.net

N SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN, China and Taiwan, the MMORPG, CABAL Online, has managed fair success with its appealing action-orientated gameplay set in a quasi-science fiction/fantasy universe. The European closed Beta saw a fair share of MMO junkies taking a look at what CABAL has to offer, and the response was positive.

In a recent press release, it was announced that at the end of June CABAL Online would do away with subscription fees globally and switch over to a free-to-play model, much like Maple Story, Flyff, Scions of Fate and the six bazillion other Asian MMOs that have the free-to-play, pay-if-you-want-more-stuff model. The free-to-play model has met with reasonable success around the world, and has established itself as a viable business model for those MMOs that simply aren't World of WarCraft, Guild Wars, EVE Online etc.

The free-to-play service will rely on people purchasing CABAL Cash, a monetary unit that can be used to purchase in-game pet monsters, travelling hover boards and armour; with more content promised as the months roll by. Nation Wars is expected to be included soon, allowing for massive, largescale Player vs. Player battles.

What makes CABAL Online interesting is its approach to combat. Instead of the turn-based dice rolling most MMOs employ in the you-hit-then-l-hit style of combat, CABAL Online focuses instead on a unique arcade-action combat system that allows chain-linking combos for explosive effects. As you lay into a monster, you can keep combo attacking with your bouquet of skills until your mana runs out, and even then there are various skills that lengthen your attack chain-linking time. There's nothing quite like seeing a giant beast take over 300 consecutive hits from just one of the several

attacking players.

On the story side of things, CABAL Online weaves numerous quests and missions together into a cohesive plot spanning various time-limited dungeons that contain puzzles, tons of action and various traps.

Players create a character based on one of six classes: Warrior, Blader, Wizard, Force Archer, Force Shielder and Force Blader. The Warrior is your typical fighter class with the strongest physical attack, but hardly any Force (magical) abilities. The Blader excels in attack speed, but has a very limited understanding of Force - much like the Warrior. Wizards are extremely weak. but have powerful magic attacks, with the strongest Area of Effect skills in the game. The Force Archer is a ranged class that can use Force skills while staying a safe distance from harm. The Force Shielder uses shields and blades for a combined defence above and beyond all the other classes, while the Force Blader can enchant its weapons using Force Skills. The Force Blader is the most balanced class with even stat distribution

Part of the success CABAL Online has managed in Asian markets comes from the graphics engine that runs quite happily on old PCs and graphics cards without sacrificing too much detail - the characters and monsters are quite ornate and beautifully animated. As with most Asian MMO titles, CABAL Online has a very heavy emphasis on level grinding and on what equipment you have, but thanks to the action-orientated combat, the grinding doesn't seem so bad.

We're curious to see how the European/Global market takes to *CABAL Online* once it has been officially released. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon



GUERRILLA LEARNING

WITH THE CURRENT MEDIA HYPE ABOUT HOW GAMES ARE VIOLENT AND TEACHING PLAYERS TO BE MINDLESS. KILLING MACHINES, WE THOUGHT WE'D FOCUS ON THE GROUNDWORK THAT DESTROYS THAT IMAGE. YES, GAMES CAN AND DO HELP YOU LEARN THINGS. SO, WHAT DO PEOPLE LEARN AND HOW? IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE EXPLORATION OF THE PLAYING FIELD. MOREOVER, WITH THIS MONTH'S COMPETITION OFFERING BIG BUCKS FOR GAMES THAT EXPLORE VALUABLE CONCEPTS, WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO ...

TOTALLY DEBUNK EDUTAINMENT!

PHAT'S RIGHT. EDUTAINMENT IS a load of bull. a quiz onto the end of a game of Pac-Man or trying to take game elements like scores and applying those to repetitive exercises are truly thoughts that should have died unrealised). but it's a crying shame that 'edutainment' is what comes to mind whenever anyone talks about learning in games... Well, stop it.

Edutainment is a failed attempt at creating concepts that were never enjoyable by pretending that they're games. Typical edutainment simply lacks anything approaching gameplay (for example, a math game), so people tried adding features to try and keep players interested. Anyone who has been reading this column for a while will be able to tell you what's wrong with that picture: no matter how much you polish a turd, it'll never be a diamond!

Of course, it's completely possible to develop a fun game around adding numbers together (which we challenge you to do, if you haven't already - kids at a Game.Dev workshop in Durban came up with a brilliant, addition-based game using only normal playing cards and dice!). The problem is that it's a little harder to find the fun in a concept that we traditionally scoff at, compared to an inherently cool idea like whizzing around in fast cars. Nevertheless - and this is important - there's still fun to be had here. All it takes is a good game designer to build gameplay around it. The trick is to focus on the enjoyment of your players - we'll worry about the idea of learning later.

TOYS VS. GAMES

The big problem with edutainment was that none of it was ever developed for gamers to play. It was developed for everyone else to subvert gamers with. Edutainment had to be measurable. It had to demonstrate to all the concerned parents, teachers and education boards that, "Yes, little Timmy really was learning something from that there videogame thingy." That meant tests, quizzes, and inane questions after each level, trying to measure how much you remembered, and which you could use to pass another test later.

Imagine if toys had quizzes built into them that you had to do every half hour. That would totally ruin the fun too... Yet, what do we do with toys? We play. How do animals prepare themselves for later life? They play. It's one of the biggest sins of the modern world that our education systems manage to separate the ideas of learning and playing... That's right, we learn best while we're playing. Think about it: what's the core element of good gameplay? Progression! We want to get better, stronger, faster, and further in the game. We find it enjoyable. We have fun getting better at

Quake 4 doesn't mirror very well... You're unlikely to find a real-world Games like PopCap's Bookworm weren't lightning gun any time soon! designed with education in mind, but it's not hard to find learning in there. 3330 R N E A 0 S C N Make the word G U T U 0 A T A E D E U X E R E R N SH E N

playing the game. We enjoy learning the game's controls, story, tactics, patterns, etc.

A toy allows you to explore something in a fun way. Generally, physical toys allow us to explore our imaginations. Digital toys could allow us to explore a concept or idea, and as long as that exploration is fun, it'll be worthwhile. To turn a toy into a game, you need to add in the idea of goals and progression toward those goals. Gameplay without a goal is a toy. All that needs to be done to a game to make it impart valuable learning, without being edutainment, is to simply make the progression (which has to be part of the gameplay) be relevant to something outside the game.

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTEXT

So, if we naturally learn while playing games, are we really being taught to be the crazed murderous bastards that the media say we're becoming? Not surprisingly, the answer is a resounding "No." Because we learn things that help us improve in a game, while playing an FPS game we might learn that certain guns in the game do more damage than others and what situations they're each good in. We might also learn the enemy AI patterns and when it's safe to sneak around in the dark, instead of being gung-ho and charging in.

How much relevance any of that learning will have in assisting you in being better at the game (which we all do instinctively, and we make sure that we don't give up when we fail - that's what quicksaves are for) ends up being a matter of context. In a fantasy game setting like Quake 4, learning that railguns

QUESTION BOX:

'M RENDERING TWO views to the screen for my game. The main view is a part view of the whole room and takes up the whole screen. The second view is

miniaturised version of your terrain and then iterates through all your units and buildings (using the **with** command), drawing little dots or icons at the relevant position in the nions at the relevant position in the mini terrain. The relevant positioning calcs are rather simple: mini-map top left corner + (object position in world * scale factor); Where scale

are useful and how far bouncepads fling you doesn't help much in the real world because we don't have railguns or bounce-pads (unless you're from Stroggos). However, if you're playing a 'realistic' FPS, the info that headshots are generally lethal should probably help you stay alive the next time someone starts shooting at you (as often happens, obviously).

It's the context of a game that determines how useful the things you learn while playing it will be. If a game system closely matches a similar or related system in real life, getting good at the game will mean that you have a greater understanding of that system next time you see it in reality. We call this approach 'mirroring'. Someone who plays a management game that closely mirrors how a sports league actually performs will definitely understand much more about that league in real life (and be able to use that knowledge better) than someone who only plays the arcade game version of that sport.

THIS IS WHERE YOU COME IN

Therefore, to completely destroy edutainment (and shut up alarmist media forever), game developers need to start producing games that mirror aspects of the real world in enough detail so fun gameplay in those game worlds produces some sort of measurable impact... Remember, that's the problem here: we need to develop games in which the simple act of progressing from start to finish gives players a useful understanding of something (anything, as long as getting there is fun and there are no silly quizzes along the way).

With the large amounts of cash Competition 15 is offering to designers who can produce guerrilla learning, we thought you'd like to know how it's done Remember, a game can be fun and useful at the same time. It's just a matter of mirroring. NAG

WIN YOUR SHARE OF R10,000 IN COMP 15!

HAT'S RIGHT; GAME.DEV is giving away another ten grand in prize money in its latest game development competition, graciously sponsored your imaginations into overdrive. The competition started on the 1st of June and ends on the 31st of July 2007. So, it's on right this instant. Get busy

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MOVIES

AT THE CINEMA:

GRINDHOUSE

MMM, OKAY. THIS ISN'T really out yet. Apparently it's coming up, but we've not seen it appear on local 'coming soon' areas. That might have to do with the movie's poor performance at the US box office – strange, since it's actually two films back-to-back from Robert "Desperado" Rodriguez and Quinton Tarantino, thought he middle is occupied by three fake trailers from Rob Zombie, Edgar Wright

(Shaun of the Dead) and Eli Roth (Hostel). The two films and the trailers are all tipping their hats to the seventies 'grindhouse' theatres where exploitation and other unrated films lived on for a while longer. So Grindhouse is violent, explicit and too cool for school. The full feature runs at just over three and a half hours, but maybe the DVD version will show up soon. After all, it did take Silent Hill over a year to get here.



Deja Vu

Cast: Denzel Washington, Val Kilmer

Director: Tony Scott Genre: Thriller Rating: 13 V

A bomb destroys a ferry with over 500 navy men and their families on it. An ATF agent starts to investigate the attack and soon uncovers more clues to another murder that points to the man responsible for the attack. Thanks to this, he is approached by the F.B.I., which is using a very advanced surveillance method to try and find out what really happened. But is there more to it? Is there a way the investigators could actually affect the past?

The movie: Deja Vu is not bad, but not terrific. Washington's character is very intelligent, but still manages to be incredibly stupid a lot of the times. But the more fascinating/annoying bit must be the surveillance system, to which there is obviously much more than is initially being shown. The trick, though, is to not try and make too much sense of it all, especially since this is another one of those time-and-space movies that uses a few Quantum Physics buzzwords to explain its 'science'. Not bad, but Deja Vu could have been a lot more exciting.

The DVD: Making-ofs and deleted scenes. Nice box, though



COMICS Written by Clive Burmeister

Frank Frazetta's Deathdealer #1

Format: Comic Series Publisher: Image Writer: Joshua Ortega Artist: Nat Jones Price: R33.50

Deathdealer is one of world-renowned fantasy artist Frank Frazetta's most famous characters, and is now coming back to comics in a new story from Image comics. It starts off in a well put together issue, with nice writing and artwork, from true fans of Frazetta, which shows in the comic. It may not be Frazetta's original, but it's a good likeness for his fans out there. I am personally a big fan of Frank Frazetta and The Deathdealer, and I'm not disappointed with this one.



SHHHUK

Desolation Jones: Made in England Vol. 1

Publisher: Wildstorm Writer: Warren Ellis Artist: J.H. Williams III Price: R124.95

Once again, writer Warren Ellis hits the ball right out of the park! Desolation Jones is a masterpiece, a must-read for anyone whole likes the gritty, hard, and dark humoured side of comics. This first volume tells the story of Michael Jones, the only survivor of a dangerous experiment done by the British government to MI6 agents that were no longer field-ready, as he takes on a case of intrigue and outrage in the underground intelligence community of L.A.





Dead Fish

Cast: Gary Oldman, Robert Carlyle, Terence Stamp, Billy Zane

Director: Charley Stadler **Genre:** Comedy Thriller Rating: 16 LSV

One guy is about to have a really bad day. While trying to stop his girlfriend from leaving him and taking a train back home, he accidentally swaps mobile phones with a contract killer. Then he answers a call on the cell, where someone gives him directions to a locker. This tips off the agency behind the contract killer and it sends two more assassins to see what's going on. Meanwhile, a local club owner with a nasty streak wants the money back the guy loaned from him- or else. On top of that, he's supposed to kill a man called Fish.

The Movie: It's another British-American style movie where a few actors are from the US and the rest are Brits. It all plays like the slightly-arb gangster thrillers that we've seen recently, like Lucky Number Slevin, along with that quirky British touch. Dead Fish also brings the wry and dry humor of Brit gangster films with it, especially with the likes of Gary Oldman, Terence Stamp and Robert Carlyle taking up roles. Billy Zane and Karel Roden add their own touches as the extra assassins. However, the ending, though, is very weak and the movie likes to think it is being funny, but most of the time it's stuff we've seen before. Not bad, but fades quickly.

The DVD: Only trailers as extras.



Night at the Museum

Cast: Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Owen Wilson Director: Shawn Levy

Genre: Comedy Adventure

Rating: PG

A dad who can't keep a job and keeps waiting for his 'moment' finally takes a normal job as a museum guard, all so he can keep his place and keep seeing his son. Things are looking up and there's even a cute girl at reception. But at nights things come alive, thanks to a cursed tablet in the Pharaoh exhibition. Can he calm the T-Rex? Will Attilla and his horde catch him? Can he stop the cowboys and Romans from fighting? Lucky the US's 26th president is there to help.

The movie: It's more or less for kids or someone looking for something really easy-going. Ben Stiller is just a bit too much and does a lot of skit stuff that doesn't always carry, unless you like really silly. Robin Williams and Owen Wilson help out as two of the museum exhibits, plus the special effects are pretty cool. But it's just all-out goofy, complete with monkeys, happy music and screaming mummies. Great for kids, but that's about it.

The DVD: Bloopers, commentary, deleted scenes, alternate opening and making-of, plus a game



Little Miss Sunshine

Cast: Abigail Breslin, Greg Kinnear Director: Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris

Genre: Comedy Drama

Rating: 13 L

When a little girl from a rather dysfunctional family gets the chance to compete in the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant in California, everyone gets into the VW bus to go along, although not everyone wants to. There's the Life Coach husband trying to make it big, the wife's brother who recently tried to commit suicide, the teenage son who doesn't talk and the foul-mouthed grandpa who taught the girl her steps for the pageant. Along the way they laugh, $\ensuremath{\mathsf{cry}}$ and eventually come to terms with each other.

The Movie: This isn't all-out serious drama. If you enjoyed stuff like Napoleon Dynamite or Transamerica, you'll enjoy this. If you're expecting something very witty or incredibly profound, the movie doesn't pack that much of a punch.

The DVD: Alternate ending as well as commentary





Fruits Basket Vol. 1

Format: Manga Graphic Novel Publisher: Tokyopop Created by: Natsuki Takaya Price: R94.95

Fruits Basket is a light-hearted drama/romance/ comedy story that keeps its story flowing fluidly without becoming too bogged down with serious issues, although it does touch on a few deeper topics. Takaya tells the story of a young girl who recently lost her mother, and is thrown into a strange life of new friends and hot boys and strange ancient curses, while she still deals with being a teenage girl and the loss of her mother. A good story, and nicely put together, Fruits Basket is a manga title I'd suggest.





Legion of Monsters: Man-Thing #1

Format: Comic Series Publisher: Marvel Writer: Charlie Huston Artist: Klaus Janson Price: R25.50

The latest revival of the Man-Thing title from Marvel introduces the scene in what I found a rather bland first issue. In my opinion, the writing is a little on the side of "trying too hard", the art is barely mediocre, and the story, well at least it can only get better. Then on the other hand, Marvel is one of the biggest comic publishers in the world, so they probably know what they're doing. Some people out there are sure to enjoy it







RAVEN'S LOFT

THE WAY FORWARD

AST MONTH, I TOOK an early, pre-release look at the new Magic set, Future Sight. This month, I can comment more fully on this set. Having played in the pre-release events, I can say that with this new set Wizards of the Coast is regaining the plot...

BACK ON TRACK

Allow me first to discuss, in very brief and general terms, my experiences at the pre-releases. Upon first opening my packs, I found very little 'wow' factor in the cards I opened (admittedly, my pull in the first event was poor). Nevertheless, one has to work with what one gets, so I knuckled down to it.

Both tourneys turned out more entertaining than I expected, particularly the second one. In fact, in the latter I found that every game was entertaining (except one mana-screwed game, naturally enough) and interesting. The interactions between the cards are interesting, and it seems the general power creep that has been seen lately, and particularly in Planar Chaos, has been slowed considerably. So, while there was little to go "whoa!" about, there were plenty of tight games and interesting plays.

In addition to the power level having been properly checked, it seems that the colour pie is once again being respected. It also looks like the abovementioned item of confectionery is being tweaked somewhat (mainly in terms of white getting the 'rescue' mechanic – returning own permanents to hand, at instant speed). Also, alongside the new mechanics being showcased, some old ones made welcome returns, such as scry. Scry is no longer limited to a value of two, and is no longer purely a rider (i.e. tacked on after other effects.) In fact, most of the new scry cards' effects interact with the scry itself, allowing you to first manipulate the top of your library, and then accomplishing something according to what is at deck's top afterward. **NAG**

SCRYING THE SYNERGIES

This month, in this section, I would like to do something different. Instead of highlighting a few individual cards, I will instead present the sealed deck that won me a second-place finish (despite the mana-screwed wash match), as an example of overall synergies. So, what is this deck all about? Its inspiration was one of my rare pulls, the Magus of the Moat. This card prevents non-fliers from attacking, so I decided to get my deck to win by means of flying creatures. As it turned out, I had pulled a fair number of evasive creatures, most of them fliers, with an un-

blockable and a couple of shadows in white, blue and black. I had pulled some decent removal in red, including the 'mini-Wrath' Sulfurous Blast, but most of it cost two red mana, and there was a lot synergy between the cards in the three colours I ended up settling on. So, with great reluctance, I cut red from the equation. Of course, I couldn't centre my deck around one card alone, but at the same time, I had to make sure that different elements would not interfere with each other. The number of evasive threats was sufficient, so I went ahead with my plan.

It's important, in limited, to include creature removal whenever possible. My pull was somewhat light in that regard, so I included every shred I had, including the interesting Leaden Fists. Lastly, the Magus of the Moat and some of my other creatures were very valuable, so I included the Tolarian Sentinel, I had pulled, and a Momentary Blink to allow my important creatures to dodge removal. A small amount of bounce, which I had pulled, served multiple duties: temporary removal, combat trick, tempo advantage, or rescue of assets.

LANDS

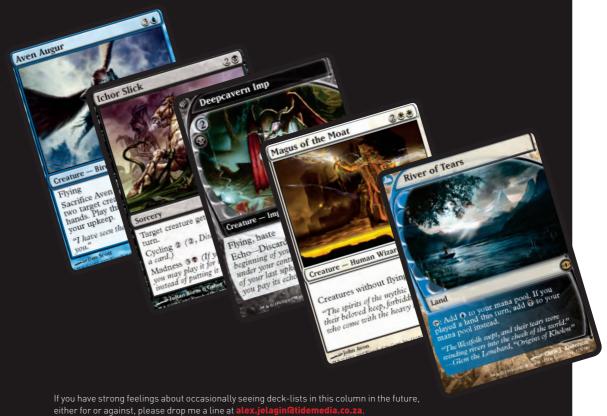
- 5 x Plains
- 5 x Island
- 3 x Swamp
- 1 x River or rear:
- 1 x New Benalia
- 1 x Terramorphix Expanse

CREATURES

- 1 x Augur il-Vec
- 1 x Duskrider Peregrine
- 1 x Magus of the Moat
- 1 x Pulmonic Sliver 1 x Aven Augur
- 1 x Brine Elemental
- 1 x Deep-Sea Kraken
- 1 x Drifter il-Dal
- 1 x Errant Ephemeron
- 1 x Sarcomite Myr
- 1 x Tolarian Sentinel
- 1 x Whip-Spine Drake
- 1 x Augur of Skulls
- 2 x Deepcavern Imp

OTHER SPELLS

- 1 x Prismatic Le
- 1 x Judge Unworthy 1 x Momentary Blink
- 1 x Careful Consideration
- 1 x Forese
- 1 x Leaden Fists
- 1 x Snapback
- 1 x Funeral Charr
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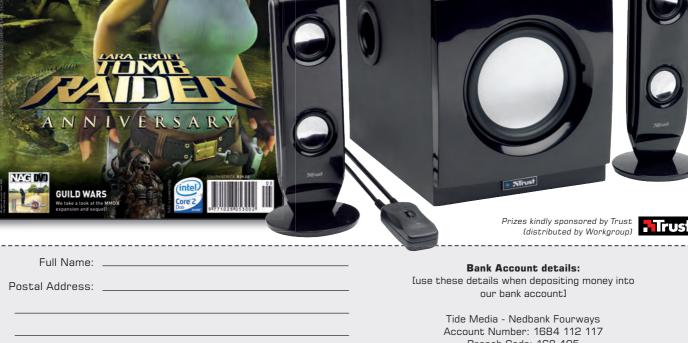
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VÖL E ISSUE MC² JUNE 2007

PROOF: GAMES MAKE U SMARTR

10 REASONS WHY THE WII FAILED AMONGST THE CATATONIC

CHEAT CODES TO TURN ANY GAME CHARACTER NAKED

> ÜMLÄUTS! I LÖVE ÜMLÄUTS!

TINSELTOWN TERMS TERMS

HOLLYWOOD PWNS YOUR STUPID GAMING ASS

Disclaimer: Übërgāmër is 100% made up from scratch each month using only the finest premium blend of bullsh1t we can dream up. If you have issues with this our legal team is waiting for your call...

ÜBER EDITOR

et me tell you something: Torrent
Catscan wasn't hardcore! He thought
he was hardcore, but he wasn't. He was
a wimp. He sucked. He had to hand over his
Über editor position and go away, because
he sucked.

I'm hardcore! I proved it by beating Torrent in a Quake III match to prove how hardcore I am, and how much Torrent sucked. He was schooled so hard that he lost his core. When you're dealing with the hardcore, you can't just pwn at one game like Torrent did. You gotta pwn at all games! Torrent thought he was hardcore enough because he was über in Unreal Tournament 2004, but he wasn't über enough at all. Übergamer has a strict policy here when it comes to who gets to be Über editor, and that's the Policy of Pwnage. If you get pwned, you suck and you can't be Über editor anymore - so go cry to your mom.

It started off all leet as I challenged Torrent to a one-on-one in Quake III with the OSP MOD to increase my FPS and FPM, because you can't one-on-one without PICMIP 5 on my QC rig with my GF8. The challenger always gets to pick the game, and the game was Quake III because Quake III is hardcore. I could have pwned him at any game, because I pwn at all things, but when you take a little girl out to school, you should pick the best school and that school is the old school, QuakeSkool!

He was all Armour and Railgun, but I totally Shotgunned and Rocketed his lame ass all across Longest Yard without even ever jumping the void to go wipe his ass off that little gay platform where the RailTube spawns. After only five minutes he burst into tears, quit the server, uninstalled Quake III and bitched "Lame Camper Fag NoobTube" constantly - talk about being a nublet.

So, we kicked his ass out of the office and gave him a copy of Fantasy Dress-up for Men, also know as World of WarCraft, so he wouldn't feel so bad at being pwned. And if he's going to get pwned, he should stick to games that can't pwn you like Fantasy Dressup for Men.

So, now I'm Über editor and you'd better believe I'm hardcore, because I don't just pwn at games I like. I pwn at games you like and I'll always be there in your base to cap your flag or nuke it or impose economic sanctions or puke in front of your rollercoaster so that your Theme Park gets a poor rating, because I'm hardcore and none of these Übergamer writers can even touch me.

So check it: Übergamer is here to stay because it pwns, and I approve of things that pwn because I'm a pwner. I pwn the pwnage! If you think you can do better, pick a game, anytime, anywhere, and bring it if you think you're hardcore enough. Nublet.

Dragon McSmackdown
Übergamer Editor



BURNOUT: PARADISE TURNS UP THE GORE

Soon after Burnout: Paradise hits the shelves, Criterion will be releasing an HC (Human Carnage) upgrade pack for download at 2,800 (unconfirmed) Microsoft Points on Xbox LIVE. A representative from Xbox LIVE stated, "this is exactly the kind of strategy we're encouraging other developers to adopt to attract more gamers to LIVE and get the existing base to buy new and exciting content for their games."

The HC upgrade, which is sounding rather similar to that old SCi classic, Carmageddon, will add a little human cargo to the Burnout mixing pot. Players can expect to see human bodies being violently ejected from vehicles during the high-speed collisions the Burnout series is renowned for. The good news, as you'd expect, is that the human cargo (nickname: ANDY) is rather fragile and probably won't end up looking too good after most collisions. "The ANDY (AutoNomous DummY) crash-test model consists of a virtual skin sack of

bones, muscles, internal organs and around 20 litres of blood, all packed into a realistic-looking human form." commented an insider. "Couple this with some sweet, next-generation particle effects, and you end up with exaggerated blood splatter, flying limbs and all manner of gruesome results." The team is working hard on getting the virtual blood just right. It'll coagulate on the hood of your car after a few laps. Speed through a pool of it on the tar, and you just might find yourself in a slide. It even steams in cold conditions. Expect to also see realistic, physics-based bone fragmentation and something one of the artists called "bullwhipping intestines." The German and Australian versions will feature no blood and gore, and the in-game characters will resemble crash-test dummies (boo!). Hopefully in SA, we'll get the real deal, hardcore version. At this stage, there is no confirmed PS3 version.

GOATGATE FIASCO WAS "JUST THE BEGINNING", REVEALS INSIDER

An Übergamer informant has informed Übergamer that the recent scandal surrounding Sony's launch of God of War II was just the first in a series of planned assaults on public morality.

"That was really just the beginning," claims Super Secret Agent X (not his real name). "In preparation for the upcoming launch of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Sony hired some professional thugs to kidnap and murder the boy wizard and his pals. They've been marinating in brine behind the



photocopier for three weeks already."

When Übergamer tried to confirm this, a
Sony PR spokesperson giggled diabolically
before hanging up the phone. Ü

GUITAR HERO UNLEASHES MAN'S SECRET TALENT

2-year-old janitor, Joshua Tingus, was your average blue-collar worker, going in everyday to do his job faithfully. However, his world changed when, after an impromptu game of Guitar Hero II, he suddenly discovered that he was a guitar god.

"I was cleaning one of the rooms where a bunch of students had set up the game," said the former janitor from Botherman High. "After kicking me a few times, they took bets about how far I'd get on some song called Freebird." The results were astounding. Tingus not only made a perfect score on expert difficulty, but he discovered that he was able to play a normal guitar at expert level.

"It's incredible," said Ms Cindy
Malslang, the school's music teacher,
"he took up the guitar and immediately
launched into Stairway to Heaven. Before
I could comprehend what had happened,
he was playing Purple Haze." Tingus has
since quit his job and joined a local
band, a local pub outfit called the
Barnacle Brothers.



"NOBODY WILL PREDICT THE WINNER OF THE CONSOLE WARS," ANALYSTS PREDICTS

Pollowing a three-year research study at the University of Bastard (Norway), a panel of analysts has compiled a 9,000-page report concluding that it is unlikely that anyone will be able to predict the winner of the Console Wars.

Citing such weighty influential factors as raindrops on roses, whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles, warm woollen mittens, and brown paper packages tied up with strings, project leader, Halvdan Svarte, declared that, "It's just one big cloud of 'dunno', really. The only thing we came close to predicting with any semblance

of probable accuracy is that a turn-based strategy game based on *Gigli* wouldn't be very successful. To be honest, we actually sort of lost interest halfway through. Who



ÜBERGAMER PREVIEWS HARDCORE GAME

If ew übergamer to their offices last month, because we're so hardcore. We had a look at the most hardcore game ever, which will change the face of gaming in ways that only we can imagine. If you're hardcore, you already know what game we're talking about, - we don't even have to say it.

Some people think that another hardcore game company will release something better, but that's a lie! Everyone knows this game will be the über kick-ass game this year, or any year, ever! Don't even ask what platform it's for - the hardcore one of course! What kind of noob are you?

The programming lead told us this would be the most powerful engine ever, and crush all inferior systems. It will bend genres into a new blend of FPS, RTS, RPG, MMO, SIM and even more genres you've never heard of, creating the world's first MMOFPSRTSSMSBEQWTFRPG! All gamers will be forced to pay a monthly subscription fee, but only the most hardcore gamers will be



Actual in-game graphics

allowed to play! Those who don't pay will have their PCs smashed by hit squads hired with a percentage of the monthly fees.

Stay tuned for more hardcore updates, only from Übergamer!.

"VIOLENT GAMES RUINED MY SON!"



Adistraught lady, identifying herself as "Mrs
T", has gone public about how hip-hop music
and violent games have ruined her son's life.

"It all started with 2 Live Crew and their album, As Nasty As They Wanna Be," she sobbed. "Vack went crazy and did everything to stop the album's sales. That gave him a taste for witch hunts and he's been at it ever since!" Mrs T hoped her son's obsession would end after he fought against artists like Ice Cube and Madonna, but then violent games arrived.

"Before the games, things were bad, but not like now. Back then, you could still manage, to have a conversation with Jack. He might go off about crap this or obscenity that, but he also talked about other things. However, then he discovered Grand Theft Auto. Things began to spiral downwards. He spent hours playing the game, making endless notes and phoning news producers. It was amazing how much the game sucked him in." The behaviour has been confirmed by many first-hand reports from gamers who claim to have lost countless hours trapped within the Grand Theft Auto world. However, this was just the beginning for Jack.

"Soon he was playing other awful games as well, like Bully and Manhunt. I caught him sneaking in a copy of Condemned, and he once had to be restrained when he found a copy of Carmageddon at a garage sale, but the CD was missing."

Is there hope for people like Jack? Some experts think it might be too late. One of them is Jim Rau from Website diycults.about. com: "Once the witch-hunt idea really settles, it's very hard to dislodge. I'd recommend Jack keeps a close eye for lapsing into moments of megalomania or talking complete crap."

AVESUME MOVIE GAMES!

YEAH, SURE, YOU THINK THAT ALL GAMES BASED ON MOVIES SUCK. HOWEVER, MOVIE EXPERT AND GAME GURU, ERNIE RUFFSURF, COMBINED HIS COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND DUG UP THE REAL GEMS AMONG LICENSED MOVIE GAMES.

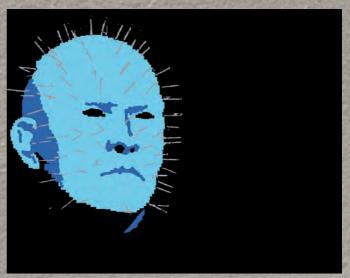
Out for Justice

Okay, it's simple: you play Stephen Seagal's character Gino in a GTA-style world, going after the bad guys. 'Cause, you see, Gino, he doesn't take no s***. He beats up any lowlife that does anything that decent citizens don't like. Throw pimps through windows, clear crack houses with a shotgun, take part in high-speed car chases after death squads, and start impromptu bar fights with local ruffians. Sheer bliss! And righteous, too. You're the good guy for a change! Gain points buying drinks from local kids and saying nifty local phrases around local types. And wear your beret the right way!



Hellraiser

I'm so glad I gave this one to my neighbour. It was already strange that the press pack looked just like that cube from the movie. Being naturally superstitious of swag, I figured that this was one thing I could flog off to my annoying neighbour who's always bugging me for games. Good call - the next time I saw him he was used to decorating the interior of his flat, and strung up like a gutted fish. But I read in an online forum that it's awesome, so there you go.



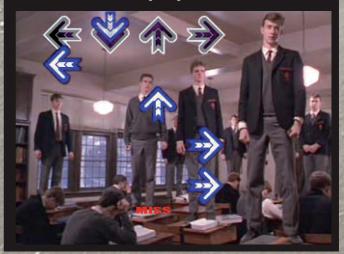
Pulp Fiction

Do you know what they call a game in Europe? This game will teach you. This little romp into the world of Tarantino fills the gaps for fans of the movie. How did Butch win the fight? How did the gimp become the gimp? What was Vincent reading? Classic scenes also feature a lot. Win the trophy at Jackrabbit Slims, then tear ass across town trying to get Mia to the dealer before she dies! Take turns in the clever puzzle games to defend a foot massage, then do the more advanced puzzle to find out if Marcell Wallace looks like a b****.



Dead Poets Society

A radical revisioning of the escapades of Robin Williams as a nun and a Swiss family of children during World War II is recaptured quite interestingly with beat poetry. Okay, sure, you don't like rhythm games, but you haven't jammed through the smooth verses of Do-Re-Me and the pounding Sound of Music. Heavy stuff and a must in any beat-afficionado's game collection. It might seem offensive to fans of the film, but it's really about time that beat poetry and arrows flashing across the screen in a way that can induce small tumours are bought together.



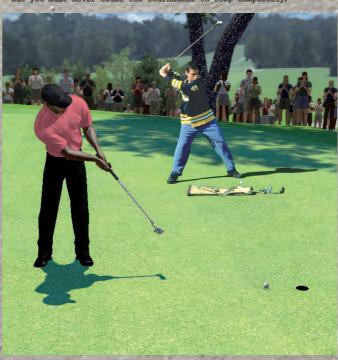
This Is Spinal Tap

Sure, you might think it's just a Guitar Hero clone, but the Spinal Tap game comes with so much more. Hook your guitar controller into the controller amplifier, which naturally goes up to eleven (isn't that awesome?) and crank it up! Play through such classics as Listen to the Flower People and Big Bottom. However, that's not all. The are plenty of mini games, such as Smell the Glove and Exploding Drummer. Some parts even require you to lick the controller. The collector's edition even comes with a large novelty demon skull you can hang from the ceiling. Yeah, man, this is the game every Tap fan prayed for.



Happy Gilmore

For some reason, golf games simply cannot match the sales of the other big sports titles. It's now clear that the lacking element was random violence. In this game, you start playing golf as the hero portrayed by Adam Sandler, who provided additional acts and voice work for extra animation. The further you hit the ball, the more time you have to instigate a fight with your caddie, partner, another golfer or the crowd. The more parties you get involved, the better - but you must never cause the tournament to stop completely.



The Game

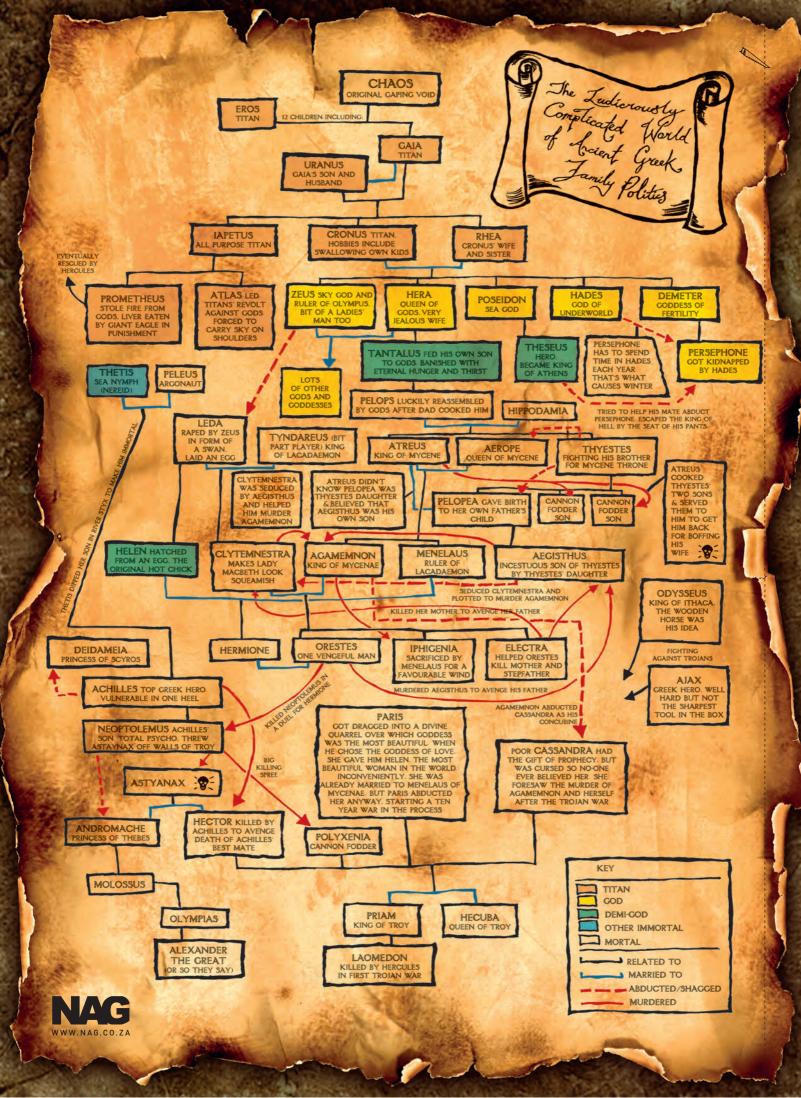
I don't get it. It's an empty box. I phoned the publisher about it and they said I should bring it in. I did, and while I was there, I took part in a few strange Quality Check sessions for some of their games. I left afterwards with another copy of The Game. However, once I got home, I discovered it was empty again! I went right back the next day, but the floor the publisher was on was completely empty. Very weird. Hey, maybe they were just scared about what I was going to say.



The Ring

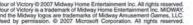
Once you start the game, you have seven days to finish it or you die in a horrible way. Ah, ha, ha, la, I have about two minutes left, but this damn article needs to be done. Look, I think you can get out of it if you give someone a copy. I'll only know in a few minutes - I've hooked it up as a torrent, but I don't know if that counts. The game itself is weird stuff where you click randomly on the screen - like Silent Hill meets Myst done backwards. I have no f***** idea what's going on. It makes no sense. Times Up! Has someone finished the torr ...Aaargh!























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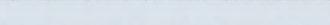
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